

2021
2025



Nottinghamshire Early Help Strategy



Nottinghamshire
Safeguarding
Children Partnership

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Foreword

In Nottinghamshire all partners are committed to working together to ensure children, young people and families receive the right support at the right time. We know that timely support provided early in the life of the child, or soon after the emergence of a problem, prevents problems escalating and maximises opportunities for children to thrive.

We know that Early Help Services are not provided in a bubble, but function as part of a complex system of universal, targeted and specialist support which works together with families and networks. It is important to us that these services continue to work together in an integrated way, and that development of these services is coordinated to deliver maximum benefit. Which is why in our partnership strategy we have set out the areas we will prioritise over the next four years to improve Early Help services for Children and Families in Nottinghamshire:

Community Resilience – Promoting and supporting communities to be resilient, equipping them with the tools to confidently and creatively use their assets to develop local solutions which address local challenges

Family Hubs – Bringing a range of teams who serve the same local community together under one roof (be it virtual or physical) to ensure closer integration and joint working to deliver positive outcomes for children and families

Contextual Approaches – developing our Whole Family approach, which uses assessments that consider the strengths and needs of all household members to include the wider context in which the child is growing up, and including the neighbourhood, peer group and online context.

Data Maturity – We are committed to improving the way we work together to share what we know about our families and their neighbourhoods so that we can use the data that is collected to improve services for families.

It is commendable that such that a wide range of services across the Early Help partnership have come together to develop this strategy. We look forward to seeing the positive impact on outcomes for children and families that we expect this approach to deliver.

Rosa Waddingham,

Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Strategic Leadership Group Chair

Chief Nurse Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Integrated Care System

Introduction

Nottinghamshire's Early Help Executive

The Early Help Strategy 2021-25 sets out that commitment and our ambitions for Early Help for children and families in Nottinghamshire; the principles that guide Early Help services; and our shared development priorities.

Our Early Help Executive brings together senior stakeholders from across the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership who are committed to the delivery of the strategy.

The Executive is a subgroup of the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership and its membership includes local authority children's services, health providers and commissioners, district councils, police, DWP and third sector partners. A detailed list of partners signed up to the strategy can be found in the infographic on page 22.

The Early Help Executive will review the strategy annually and report progress to the Safeguarding Assurance and Improvement Group (SAIG) of the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership.



In Nottinghamshire, services are considered to be providing Early Help both when issues are emerging and when they are entrenched, with the latter to prevent escalation into statutory services.

Services that provide Early Help to children and families in Nottinghamshire include

- The Early Help Unit in relation to advice and signposting
- The Children's Centre Service
- The Family Service
- The Youth Service
- The Youth Justice Service
- Educational establishments including early years settings, schools, colleges, supported by the Tackling Emerging Threats to Children team, amongst others
- Early support and specialist services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, including the Integrated Children's Disability Service (ICDS)
- Universal and specialist health services, including maternity services, Infant Feeding Coordinators, Healthy Families Programme, GPs, Family Nurse Partnership, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Integrated Health and Wellbeing Service, community paediatrics, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, contraceptive and sexual health services, substance use services
- The police, including Schools Early Intervention Officers and the 'Prevent' team
- Voluntary and community sector providers.



Strategic Context

Nottinghamshire’s Early Help System spans a range of departments within numerous organisations. Several partnership strategies, local plans and strategic documents exist to guide and govern this area of work.



The intention of the Early Help Strategy is to establish an overarching set of principles which all Early Help services are signed up to, no matter their area of particular focus and which of the above plans they are governed by. The strategy also sets out priorities for development over the next five years. These are goals shared by all services – ways of working that services are yet to have fully embedded but that we strive towards together.

Principles and Partnership Working

Nottinghamshire's Early Help Partnership approach to providing Early Help is underpinned by the following principles:

- Our ambition is for Nottinghamshire to be a place where birth and social background do not hold people back from being healthy, safe and happy, and being able to contribute to society.
- We believe Early Help is everyone's responsibility and that this is how families will receive support from the right service at the right time for them.
- We will take a holistic approach considering the needs of the whole family when assessing and responding to the needs of children and young people.
- We will work together, with families in the centre; a multi-agency partnership of universal and targeted services, community organisations and families.
- We will take a strengths-based approach, focusing on family assets and using relationship-based practice.
- We will endeavour to commission and deliver evidence-based interventions that have been shown to make a difference.





Recognising the impact of Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has widened existing inequalities across society. It is important that we reflect and acknowledge the changing needs of children, young people and families as a result of Covid-19 and the associated restrictions.

Several national reports have examined the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children, young people and families. Many parents found their ability to cope with their pregnancy or baby had been impacted and reported that the changes brought about by Covid-19 had affected their baby or young child. Many more families are experiencing food insecurity and the number of children living in poverty is rising. There is a risk to child development, including to social and emotional development, as a result of Covid-19 restrictions. The achievement gap will widen as a result of the varying abilities of parents to support their children to learn at home whilst schools are closed. Domestic abuse is likely to have increased. There is also a higher prevalence of emotional and mental health needs in parents and children, and fewer opportunities to identify and support them.

Families with lower incomes, those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, and young parents, have been hit hardest by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is more important than ever that we target our joint efforts to support these families.

Early Help Development Priorities

Community and Connectedness

Nottinghamshire's Early Help Partnership will work to improve the '**sense of community and connectedness**' within its offer for families. There is an ambition to work together as a partnership to improve performance and embed new ways of working in three priority areas:

- **Community resilience**
- **Locality family hubs**
- **Contextual approaches to working with families**

Task and finish groups for each workstream will develop detailed delivery plans and will report to the Early Help Executive. The Exec will produce an annual update to report on progress against priorities, and the impact the strategy is having on children and families in Nottinghamshire.



Community Resilience

A resilient community can withstand, adapt to and recover from, adversity.

Promoting and supporting communities to be resilient is about equipping them with the tools to confidently and creatively use their assets to develop local solutions which address local challenges such as improving the community's physical, behavioural and social health.

A resilient community is a connected community.

'Community' as a term is often used as shorthand for the connections between people. This is the relationships, bonds, identities and interests that join people together or give them a shared stake in a place, service, culture or activity.

In Nottinghamshire, we wish to focus on building community resilience to achieve several benefits:

- Upskill community / build community assets
- More sustainable outcomes for families and communities
- Reduce reliance of public funded services through needs being met by the community
- Reduce re-referrals into statutory services through sustainable community-based support for families
- Promote a preventative approach
- Foster a culture within services that values volunteers and supports them to develop skills and move towards employment.



What are we going to do?

Upskilling residents in their local community to deliver services, with support for community-based peer-led mentoring and volunteering programmes – such as Empowering Parents Empowering Communities, and BABES breastfeeding peer support groups.

Upskill the workforce to promote community organising approaches to improving neighbourhoods for families.

Influence the commissioning of Early Help services to have a greater focus of community resilience and community organising approaches.

How will we know when we have achieved it?

Community volunteers trained to deliver parenting programmes, peer support and community organising approaches.

Peer-led groups and community-organised projects are widespread countywide – these will meet a wide range of needs, addressing issues the community has identified as important to them.

Family members will be engaging with new types of community activities, they will be giving and receiving peer support and we will see evidence of needs being met through the reduction in re-referrals into services.

Services will deliver interventions which promote community resilience – within a culture of co-production across all services that values the contribution of volunteers through peer-led approaches.

Locality Family Hubs

A Family Hub is a 'one-stop shop' for families to access Early Help services in their local area. Hubs can include a wide range of services such as third sector organisations, children's centres, family services and health providers. A Family Hub could be the alignment of services physically in one building or virtually in the way families access support. What is important is that a family experiences joined up services which are relevant to their local community and are easy to access when they need them.

Family Hubs involve much closer working by organisations delivering child and family services, all of which should sign up to a multi-agency integrated approach based on collaboration, co-ordination and joint prioritisation.

Existing place-based Family Hubs which are made up of many services, interventions and interactions are difficult to describe and compare. The substantial variation in how Family Hubs have been organised and delivered locally has made it challenging to evaluate their impact and so questions about the relative effectiveness of different models are not easy to answer from the available evidence.²



² Early Intervention Foundation 2020 <https://www.eif.org.uk/report/planning-early-childhood-services-in-2020-learning-from-practice-and-research-on-childrens-centres-and-family-hubs>



A new National Centre is being developed to support local partnerships with the design of Family Hubs and thus ensure robust evaluation of the effectiveness and value for money of the Family Hub approach. This will help us in understanding which models work most effectively and can be replicated, as well as the best way to integrate a range of family services. The National Centre will draw on existing good practice among councils, where hubs often operate an 'open door' approach and families can be referred for extra help by a range of professional services. Local leads will work with the National Centre to ensure that learning from evaluation is actioned and effective performance arrangements are established from the outset.

Family Hubs play a critical role in providing:

- An easily accessible, local delivery point for services
- Targeted services based on local need, with the aim of building resilient families
- Integrated services with multi-agency, multi-disciplinary teams who know their community and understand its needs
- Multi-agency joint decision making at regular allocation meetings, to decide how best to support individual families.

DWP Youth Hubs are also being established in Nottinghamshire. This initiative will mean that young people in need of support to enter employment education or training are able to access a range of relevant services all from one location.

What are we going to do?

We will establish a Nottinghamshire Family Hubs Task and Finish Group which will champion and deliver effective and meaningful multi-agency planning and service delivery to contribute to the creation of Family Hubs to better support families, children and young people.

A needs assessment and mapping exercise will be undertaken to identify potential physical community assets which could be identified as Family Hubs or developed into Family Hubs. Localities for the development of new Family Hubs will be in areas experiencing greater inequalities.

Every local authority is required by statute to make evidence-based choices about the most effective way to deliver local place-based early childhood services (children's centres). Many existing Children's Centre Service buildings in Nottinghamshire can already be identified as a Family Hub with a focus on early childhood; the development of Family Hubs for 0-19 year olds (up to 25 for Care Leavers and Young People with Special Educational Needs) provides an opportunity to work with families to expand the service offer in one or two pilot sites initially. We will seek to maximise the existing portfolio of buildings, (that are at times under-utilised)– this will be good for the local community, and good for the council in terms of value for money and cost benefit.

Parents and carers will be fully engaged in the development/improvement of a local universal virtual Family Hub which will focus in the main on the review and redevelopment of the Notts Help Yourself website.

Explore the re-development/expansion of joint allocation and assessment meetings to provide effective integrated support packages.

The needs of local parents and carers, and children and young people will be better understood through needs assessments, consultation and the co-production of physical and virtual Family Hubs.

Young people will be fully engaged in the development and evaluation of Family Hubs and Youth Hubs in order for them to be 'young people friendly', taking into account their specific needs and concerns regarding confidentiality.

Family Hubs will be linked to DWP Youth Hubs and plans for both will be developed together wherever possible, with further integration between Youth Hubs and the council's Young People's Service.

How will we know when we have achieved it?

Family Hubs will facilitate prevention and early help, as well as working alongside specialist and statutory services. Families should be able to report a seamless pathway to access a range of support.

A shared outcomes and performance framework will be developed locally to help assess the impact of Family Hubs on outcomes for children, young people and families. Activities should demonstrate the benefits of integrated working.

At least two physical community assets (one to be a children's centre) are progressed to become pilot Family Hubs with evaluation and impact measures evidence a range of positive outcomes and experiences for families.

Families will report that they can access relevant and up to date online information through one local website identified as a virtual Family Hub. Families Information Service annual customer satisfaction exercises will continue and feedback from the 2021 annual customer satisfaction will be actioned.

There will be evidence of young people accessing Family Hubs and they report that Family Hubs are young people friendly and meet their needs.

Family Hubs will evidence value for money and that they are effective early help approaches by reducing the need for specialist and statutory services such as children's social care.

Family Hubs will harness community engagement, capacity and resilience by working with local volunteers to help the delivery of Family Hubs.

Contextual approaches to working with families

Taking a contextual approach is an extension of whole family working. It means considering individuals not just in the contexts of their families, but families within the context of their environment – both physical and virtual. We should seek to understand and support families in the context of their relationships (household, extended family and friendships), their community (neighbourhood demographics, culture and assets). We should understand and protect children from contextual risks such as criminal, or sexual exploitation, and radicalisation.

When working with families and younger children it means considering what is happening in the physical and virtual community that is either an asset or a barrier to a family thriving and actively including this knowledge in your plans with the family. Understanding how trauma and adverse childhood experiences affect children, and young people, parents, and carers is also important part of taking a contextual approach.

When applied to working with adolescents, a contextual approach also recognises the relationships that young people form outside of their families – in their neighbourhoods, schools and online – and that these can be both a protective and a risk factor for them.

Parents and carers may have little influence over these contexts, therefore Early Help Services working with adolescents must target interventions beyond the family home when seeking to support young people to make progress and achieve their potential.



What are we going to do?

Train the multi-agency Early Help workforce to understand the impact of social media on the lives of children, young people and families. Establish an engaging and effective online presence for Early Help Services.

Develop training, tools and templates to support the multi-agency Early Help workforce to consider the context in which a family lives when undertaking assessments, with staff whom are mindful of the impact of issues such as parental conflict, education exclusion, health inequalities and local employment opportunities.

Improve and raise awareness of the information available to the Early Help workforce about the neighbourhoods in which families live, so that this can be considered when planning how to support the family.

Train the multi-agency Early Help workforce who work with adolescents to understand and respond to extra familial harm. Develop strategies for tackling these emerging risks which take a contextual approach – including peer group interventions, and neighbourhood assessments and plans.

Develop the workforce to be Trauma Informed.

How will we know when we have achieved it?

There will be evidence of assessments and intervention plans which consider the role that social media plays in the lives of families. We will see families safeguarded from the risks posed and supported to access the best that the online world has to offer. Early Help Services will develop engaging and effective online content.

Frontline staff will have access to and be confident in using data and intelligence about the locality they work in. They will be able to consider what the information means for supporting families in that area.

Within Early Help Assessments there will be increase in the analysis of the impact of contexts on the circumstances of families. We will see neighbourhood risks and strengths referenced, and influence of peer groups, friendships and family networks considered.

We will see a change in the way we work with adolescents. We will see plans which focus not just on the resilience of the young person to withstand risk of extra familial harm, but which seek to address the context in which the risk is posed.

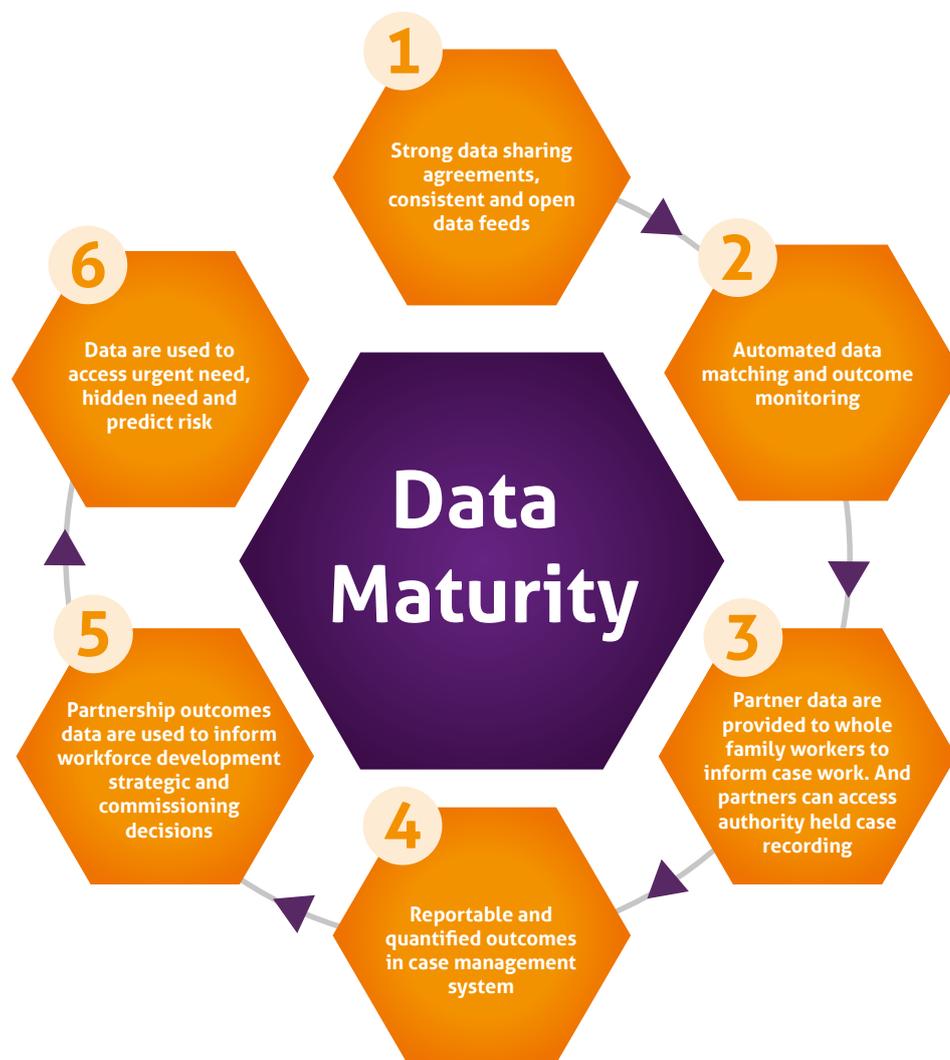
Understanding need through data and intelligence

Information is increasingly coming from a wider range of sources as people generate more data about their daily lives through the way they access and pay for services, through the internet, smart homes, mobile devices, and social media. It is being generated in many formats, from traditional structured data such as that from IT systems, databases and spreadsheets to more unstructured data such as text files, internet cookies, photos, and videos. The availability of data is growing and through computer learning, artificial intelligence and sophisticated data mining the tools to analyse it are ever developing.

Mature data systems are a key part of the infrastructure for supporting families and practice, providing a strong evidence base to help support families and commission appropriate services.

The three priority areas for the Early Help Partnership will be supported by work to improve the use of data and intelligence to understand the need within communities and to monitor the impact and outcomes of Early Help.





What are we going to do?

Improve the supply of existing data sources, reviewing the Information Sharing Agreements between Early Help and Police, Health, Housing and other Local Authority departments.

Work towards the regular submission of relevant open individual level data feeds between the Local Authority and Police, Health, Housing and Education.

Organise data securely, compliant with data protection requirements, and ensure awareness of how it should be used and protected across the frontline Early Help workforce.

Partners and the frontline workforce will be given access to data and intelligence from the Data Warehouse through a shared and secure online data hub. This will allow Early Help Services to target relevant support, getting the skills mix in their teams and hubs right for the community they are serving and will inform the work of the frontline Early Help workforce.

How will we know when we have achieved it?

Data governance at a strategic level will be established, overseeing data sharing and use across all partners to support families.

Key data sources will be joined together through the County Council Enterprise Data Warehouse, with direct feeds from ICT business systems including Mosaic and Capita; and feeds or scheduled uploads for the addition of data from partners.

Existing manual data matching processes will be automated and managed through the Enterprise Data Warehouse.

Partners and the frontline workforce will be able to access data and intelligence from the Data Warehouse through a shared and secure online data hub.

The online data hub will include dynamic maps and dashboards that provide data visualisations and analysis of:

- Need and the Early Help Assessment
- The location and reach of community-based services and family hubs
- Demand for services
- Impact and outcomes of Early Help Services for service users
- Effectiveness of intervention; integrated working; and the delivery of the Early Help Strategy
- Forecast or modelled future demand

Data quality, gaps and opportunities will be actively managed.

Organisations and partners signed up to the Early Help Strategy:

Organisation
Nottinghamshire County Council children and families services
Building Better Opportunities
NCC Communities Team
Change Grow Live (Substance Misuse Provider Service)
Community and Voluntary Sector
District Council Director Representative
DWP
Futures
Notts Fire and Rescue
Maternity Services
Mid-Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Partnerships
NHS Universal and Targeted CYP Services
National Probation Service
Nottinghamshire Police
Public Health
Notts Women's Aid
NCC Performance Information and Policy



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