



Lincolnshire Children's Services Early Help Strategy

I. Introduction

This document outlines Lincolnshire's current Early Help Offer and Strategy for improving and developing it.

'For children who need additional help, every day matters. Academic 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'(1)

What is the Early Help Offer?

Lincolnshire's Early Help Offer identifies the need for help for children and families as soon as problems start to emerge, or when there is a strong likelihood that problems will emerge in the future.

The Early Help Offer is not just for very young children as problems may also emerge at any point throughout childhood and adolescence. The Early Help Offer includes universal and targeted services designed to reduce or prevent specific problems from escalating or becoming entrenched.

What makes up the Early Help Offer?

Our commitment to early help is central to our Children and Young People's Plan with Early help cutting across our four priority outcomes:

- Children and Young People are; Healthy and Safe
- Children and Young People; Develop to their potential in their early years and are ready for school
- Children and Young People; Learn and Achieve;
- Children and Young People are; Ready for Adult Life



What does the Early Help offer mean for families currently?

Crucially for parents, it is envisaged that, in time, the Early Help Offer will provide the 'front door' through which they and professionals access additional support at any level.

The critical features of an effective early help offer are:

- a multi-disciplinary approach that brings a range of professional skills and expertise to bear through a "Team Around The Child" approach
- a relationship with a trusted Lead Professional who can engage the child and their family, and coordinate the support needed from other agencies
- practice that empowers families and helps them to develop the capacity to resolve their own problems
- a holistic approach that addresses children's needs in the wider family context
- simple, streamlined referral and assessment processes.

Our early help offer recognises the crucial role that all family members – not just mothers and fathers, but step parents, grandparents, siblings and other extended family members 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. (2, 3, 4, 5)

The new 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 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.

Our offer also takes into account key messages from Munro's review (6):

- 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

Central to our early help offer is the early identification of children and families who would benefit from early help and a co-ordinated early assessment and response to prevent abuse and neglect of children and young people, and improve outcomes for children and families as a whole.



2. Identifying children and families who would benefit from early help

Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation through to teenage years. (1)

The effectiveness of early identification is underpinned by professional responsibility both of the referring and of the receiving agency to ensure that if a family does not meet the thresholds for specific services, that action is taken to prevent the lower level needs escalating, whilst also being alert to identifying children who without support will not reach their full potential.

Our early help offer therefore puts the responsibility on all professionals to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs for individual children and families, irrespective of the whether they are providing services to children or adults. The professionals working mainly 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 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 needs of early intervention approaches.

'Working together' recommends that 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, domestic violence and / or
- is showing early signs of abuse and / or neglect and / or sexual exploitation

In relation to family circumstances, routine enquiry is developing in 0 - 19 health services in relation to domestic abuse and maternal mental health following childbirth and in Adult Social Care in relation to early identification of young carers. Munro states that in relation to family circumstances, whilst this may increase the risk of poor outcomes, this does not make harm inevitable.

Early help services are also integral to cases stepping down out of Children's Social Care services, and Troubled Families Support, to enable a lower level of help to be offered to reduce future need for high level support and statutory intervention.

This document should be read in conjunction with 'Meeting the Needs of Children in Lincolnshire,' which provides an overview of the continuum of needs and guidance on the key concepts and processes in working with children, young people and their families according to their needs.



3. Who can Access Support?

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

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.

Universal services are available to all children, young people and families, working with families to promote positive outcomes for everyone, by providing access to education, health services and other positive activities. Practitioners working in these services should identify where children and families would benefit from extra help at an early stage.

Targeted services focus on children, young people and families who may need support either through a single service or through an integrated multi-agency response. They work with families where there are signs that without support a child may not achieve good outcomes and fulfil their potential. However targeted services are also critical in preventing escalation into specialist services, and will also assist with continuing lower level support once a higher level intervention has been completed.

Specialist services focus on families with individual or multiple complex needs, including where help has been requested through Section 17 and Section 47 or where a specific disability or condition is diagnosed.

What is important is that professionals work together effectively to ensure that families experience smooth transition between services and that all services supporting the family remain focused on the needs of the child.

It is also critical that all professionals remain aware of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and protecting children.



4. How to access early help

Local agencies should work together to put processes in place for the effective assessment of the needs of individual children who may benefit from early help services. (1)

To ensure that the best possible support is provided to children and families there needs to be an early assessment of need considering child's developmental needs, family and environmental factors and parenting capacity.

Locally this assessment is undertaken currently through usage of the Single Assessment (formerly CAF). For a full step by step guide for TAC please see www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/TAC

Working Together 2013 describes this assessment as an Early Help Assessment. We will move to use this title and language instead of the Single Assessment Framework in the near future following a review of the existing paperwork and processes.

In some cases a professional will be able to identify a specific need, but will not be in a position to provide appropriate locally sourced support. In this instance a TAC co-ordinator will work with the referrer to identify the appropriate help and support to access from a single agency.

Where the assessment identifies support needs that cannot be met by a single agency or service, there needs to be a co-ordinated response with local agencies working together to support the family. The Team around the Child (TAC) model is used locally to bring together a range of different practitioners from across the children and young people's workforce and sometimes from adult services to support an individual child or young person and their family. The members of the TAC develop and deliver a package of solution focused support to meet the needs identified through the Single Assessment (formerly CAF) with a lead professional identified to co-ordinate the support and act as the key point of contact for the family and professionals / services. Decisions about who should be the lead professional should be taken on a case by case basis and should be informed by the child and their family.

Working Together states that in order for an early assessment to be effective:

- the assessment should be undertaken with the agreement of the child and their parents/ carers. It should involve the child and family as well as all the professionals who are working with them
- if parents and/or the child do not consent to an early help assessment, then the lead professional should make a judgement as to whether, without help, the needs of the child will escalate. If so, a referral into local authority children's social care may be necessary



5. Our outcomes, performance and indicators

Our Early Help Offer is targeted at achieving our Priority Outcomes as set out in the Children and Young People's Plan.

We will also identify tactical actions that will help us to achieve the Priority Outcomes. These will be prioritised in agreement with the Children and Young People's Partnership. The table below illustrates how this will look. Each action may contribute to achieving more than one of the priority outcomes as indicated by the "x" under each outcome. In addition to the four priority outcomes we will also seek to make best use of the resources that are available.

Early Help (Tactical Actions)	Best use of Resources				
	Early Years and Ready for School	Learn and Achieve	Ready for Adult Life	Healthy & Safe	
Minimise the number of Pregnancies in Teenage years (Child & Family Health)	x		x	x	
Young Children & their families are in good Health (Child & Family Health)	x	x	x	x	x
Minimise Incidence of children born with Birth Defects, low birth rate or requiring neonatal care (Child Development)	x			x	x
Parents & Carers are able to give their child the best start in life (Aspiration & Parenting)	x			x	
Those most in need of support are engaged in appropriate services (Closing the gap)	x	x	x	x	x
Minimise the number of Children living in poverty (Health & Lifechances)	x	x	x	x	
Children develop to the level they should be at age 2 to 2.5 Years (Child Development)	x			x	
Children achieving a good level of development at age 5 (Children are "Ready for school")	x	x		x	
Minimise un-planned or unauthorised absence from school		x		x	
Minimise exclusions from schools		x		x	x
Children & Young People receive good and outstanding Education & Training		x	x	x	
Children achieving a good level of development at age 11 (Children are "Ready" for secondary school)		x		x	
Young people achieve a high level of qualifications at school that enable them to go onto further education, employment or training		x	x	x	
Minimise child deaths	x		x	x	
Safeguard children from harm	x		x	x	
Minimise the number of children subject to child protection			x		
Health outcomes of LAC are maximised	x	x	x	x	
Minimise the number of children looked after				x	x
Health needs of care leavers are prioritised			x	x	
Narrow the attainment gap between children with SEN and others	x	x		x	
Children's transition to adulthood is effective and Value For Money		x	x	x	x
Maximising the health of children with SEN		x		x	x
Prevalence of substance misuse is minimised	x	x	x	x	x
Minimise prevalence of young people involved in crime				x	x
Improve sexual health in young people aged 15-24					
Minimise the number of C&YP and families who are homeless			x		
Increase the number of young people in EET			x	x	x
Minimise the number of children who are obese	x		x	x	x
Children & Young People's dental health is good	x	x	x	x	
Access to Universal Services is facilitated cost effectively	x	x	x	x	x
Stakeholders are satisfied with service provision (including Health Provision)	x	x	x	x	
Maximise the Emotional wellbeing of children, young people and their Families & Carers	x	x	x	x	
Minimise prevalence of self harm and suicide amongst children and young people		x	x	x	
Minimise number of avoidable hospital admissions for children and young people	x	x	x	x	x
Minimise the number of Children living in Troubled Families	x	x		x	x
Minimise the number of C&YP exposed to Domestic violence				x	

In terms of monitoring whether the outcomes have been achieved the Children and Young Peoples Partnership will agree a number of key performance indicators which will help

us to understand what impact our Early Help Offer is having. These key performance indicators are set out in the Children and Young Peoples Plan.

6. Our Early Help Strategy

This section describes the actions we are going to take to improve and develop the Early Help arrangements in Lincolnshire.

Objective 1	Review and improve Single Assessment Form (SAF)/Team Around the Child (TAC) arrangements
Actions	<p>Redevelop SAF/TAC pathway and process to be compliant with Early Help arrangements as described in Working Together 2013.</p> <p>Ensure that the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) has the capacity to monitor, review and Quality Assure the current and new arrangements</p> <p>Implement recommendations from Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) TAC Audit</p>
Potential Outputs	<p>New front to end process developed and embedded for Early Help arrangements</p> <p>Strengthened referral process</p> <p>Quality Assurance arrangements in place</p> <p>New Early Help Assessment (EHA)</p> <p>Increased multi-agency investment in process</p> <p>Better step up and down arrangements</p> <p>Increased use of EHA and TAC</p>
Outcome(s) to be delivered	That for help for children and families is identified as soon as problems start to emerge, or when there is a strong likelihood that problems will emerge in the future and that services are provided in a timely manner
Lead Officer	Stuart Carlton
Progress and Monitoring Arrangements	The Early Help Steering Group is accountable for the delivery of this objective.

Objective 2	Implement Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH)
Actions	<p>Move to the delivery of a central MASH including multi-agency referral screening arrangements.</p> <p>Create locality MASHs to ensure that all agencies are responsive to Safeguarding concerns.</p>
Potential Outputs	<p>Provide the highest level of knowledge and analysis of all known intelligence and information across the safeguarding partnership to ensure individuals who are potentially high risk cases are identified and that risk management interventions are timely and proportionate</p> <p>Identify repeat patterns of risky behaviour/or lower level/isolated welfare concerns as opposed to just high risk of serious harm concerns to ensure individuals who are potentially high risk cases are identified and that risk management interventions are timely and proportionate</p> <p>Provide analysis of multi-agency information to increase identification of cases of child sexual exploitation</p> <p>Provide analysis of information linking to Accident and Emergency (A&E) admissions to enable patterns of attendance/ behaviours and risk to be identified and managed</p> <p>Promote stronger links with schools, particularly since the shift to academy status so the broadest level of knowledge and analysis of information is available</p>
Outcome(s) to be delivered	The multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) brings together a variety of agencies into an integrated multi-agency team, where they share information appropriately and securely on children, families and adults around the child or young person, in order to take timely and appropriate actions to safeguard and promote the welfare of Lincolnshire Communities
Lead Officer	Janice Spencer
Progress and Monitoring Arrangements	The Lead officer will provide update and progress reports to the Early Help Steering Group

Objective 3	Implement Signs of Safety
Actions	<p>Train all Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) Children's Services staff in 'Signs of Safety'</p> <p>Brief all partner agencies on 'Signs of Safety'</p> <p>Embed the approach at all levels of Children's Partnership, including use in strategy discussions, Child Protection meetings, Assessments and plans.</p>
Potential Outputs	<p>Signs of Safety tools are flexible and can be adapted across multi agencies and multiple situations. It will be used across</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early intervention TAC/CAF • Targeted support • Referral to children's social care • Parenting assessments • Social Care Assessments • Child protection conference and reviews • Core groups • Child in Need meetings • Legal planning meetings • Throughout care proceedings • Throughout a child's looked after journey • Looked after reviews • At any point where risk needs to be assessed • Step up step down • Case closure
Outcome(s) to be delivered	<p>Signs of Safety seeks to empower practitioners confidence through creating a more constructive culture around child protection practice, whilst remaining vigilant and realistic about risk.</p> <p>Signs of Safety is an approach that is focused on solution and safety and has been field tested by social worker's</p> <p>Signs of Safety builds collaborative and constructive working relationships between professionals and family members</p>
Lead Officer	Janice Spencer
Progress and Monitoring Arrangements	The Lead officer will provide update and progress reports to the Early Help Steering Group

Objective 4	Implement a system of risk management for risky adolescent behaviours
Actions	<p>Implement an agreed partnership approach for identifying, sharing and managing risky adolescent behaviours, based upon the Northumberland model</p> <p>The development of a multi-agency Risk Management Group that works with young people to develop a consistent approach to risk management.</p>
Potential Outputs	<p>A Vulnerability Checklist and Assessment is developed that covers a range of risk and protective factors, including emotional health, physical health, sexual health, social and environmental factors, substance misuse, offending behaviour and whether a young person has been reported missing to the police.</p> <p>A risk management process is developed and embedded that can be used for any adolescent considered to be at high or very high risk due to their own behaviour.</p>
Outcome(s) to be delivered	It is widely recognised that adolescents with complex behaviours present a particularly difficult challenge to local authorities as a result of their high-risk behaviours and their unwillingness or inability to positively engage with services. This project will result in a clear strategy to support adolescents and the provision of services specifically designed to promote better outcomes for these young people.'
Lead Officer	Andy Cook
Progress and Monitoring Arrangements	The Lead officer will provide update and progress reports to the Early Help Steering Group

Objective 5	Further embed Families Working Together (FWT) programme
Actions	Further develop FWT as a vehicle for multi-agency work to enable complex family change.
	Further develop locality multi-agency teams.
	Give further consideration to local indicators.
Potential Outputs	To Be developed
Outcome(s) to be delivered	To be developed
Lead Officer	Jo Kavanagh
Progress and Monitoring Arrangements	To be developed

Objective 6	Develop a Readiness for School Offer
Actions	Develop and implement a Readiness for School Offer for Lincolnshire.
Potential Outputs	Families need to be able to access all the early childhood services they need through children's centres. Early childhood services are defined as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • early years provision (early education and childcare); • social services functions of the local authority relating to young children, parents and prospective parents; • health services relating to young children, parents and prospective parents; • training and employment services to assist parents or prospective parents; and • information and advice services for parents and prospective parents.
Outcome(s) to be delivered	The School Readiness offer will offer early identification and early intervention services which aim to improve outcomes for young children and their families, with a particular focus on families in greatest need of support in order to reduce inequalities in: child development and school readiness; parenting aspirations, self-esteem and parenting skills; and child and family health and life chances.
Lead Officer	Cornelia Andrecut
Progress and Monitoring Arrangements	The Lead officer will provide update and progress reports to the Early Help Steering Group

Objective 7	Develop a Youth Offer
Actions	Further develop the Youth Offer arrangements for Lincolnshire.
Potential Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth & Community Development • Targeted Youth Support • Volunteering • Commissioning • Information, Advice and Guidance • Improved Employment and Learning Opportunities • Young people's Voice
Outcome(s) to be delivered	<p>The reshaped integrated youth offer will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide greater support to a wider range of young people, helping them build on their strengths and resilience to whether changes in their lives • Be better able to respond to the needs of the diverse population of young people in their local communities • Be more sustainable, drawing on existing resources in the community • Be more flexible and responsive to the ever changing needs of young people and their communities • Have a greater focus on improving life chances rather than on service delivery • Have more effective identification of young people who need extra help and provision of intensive support when that is needed co-ordinated through the Team Around the Child process • Be more sustainable, drawing on existing resources in the community <p>We will have successfully reshaped our youth support services if we can show we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased opportunities for young people to make use of services • improved quality of services from the perspective of young people • improved satisfaction of young people with services • reached a larger representative proportion of the youth population
Lead Officer	Jo Kavanagh
Progress and Monitoring Arrangements	The Lead officer will provide update and progress reports to the Early Help Steering Group

Objective 8	Support and Aspiration
Actions	Ensure that Lincolnshire is able to meet, and go beyond, its statutory duties for Children and Young People who have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND). Implement a single Education, Health and Care Plan by Sept 2014 Publish a Local Offer of Services for 0 – 25 year olds with SEND
Potential Outputs	Children's special educational needs are picked up early and support is routinely put in place quickly Staff have the knowledge, understanding and skills to provide the right support for children and young people who have SEN or are disabled wherever they are; Parents know what they can reasonably expect from their local school, local college, local authority and local services to provide, without them having to fight for it For more complex needs, an integrated assessment and a single Education, Health and Care Plan from birth to 25 Greater control for parents over the services they and their family use.
Outcome(s) to be delivered	Improved service delivery and quality which is clear to parents regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education, health and social care provision • Statutory entitlements, eligibility criteria and processes for redress • Who is responsible for providing services
Lead Officer	Jill Hodges
Progress and Monitoring Arrangements	The Lead officer will provide update and progress reports to the Early Help Steering Group

References

1. Working Together to Safeguard Children - A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (March 2013)
2. Allen, G. (2011), Early Intervention: the next steps
3. Tickell, C. (2010), The Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning
4. Marmot, M. (2010), Fair Society, Healthy Lives
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6. Munro, E. (2011), The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report A child- centred system



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