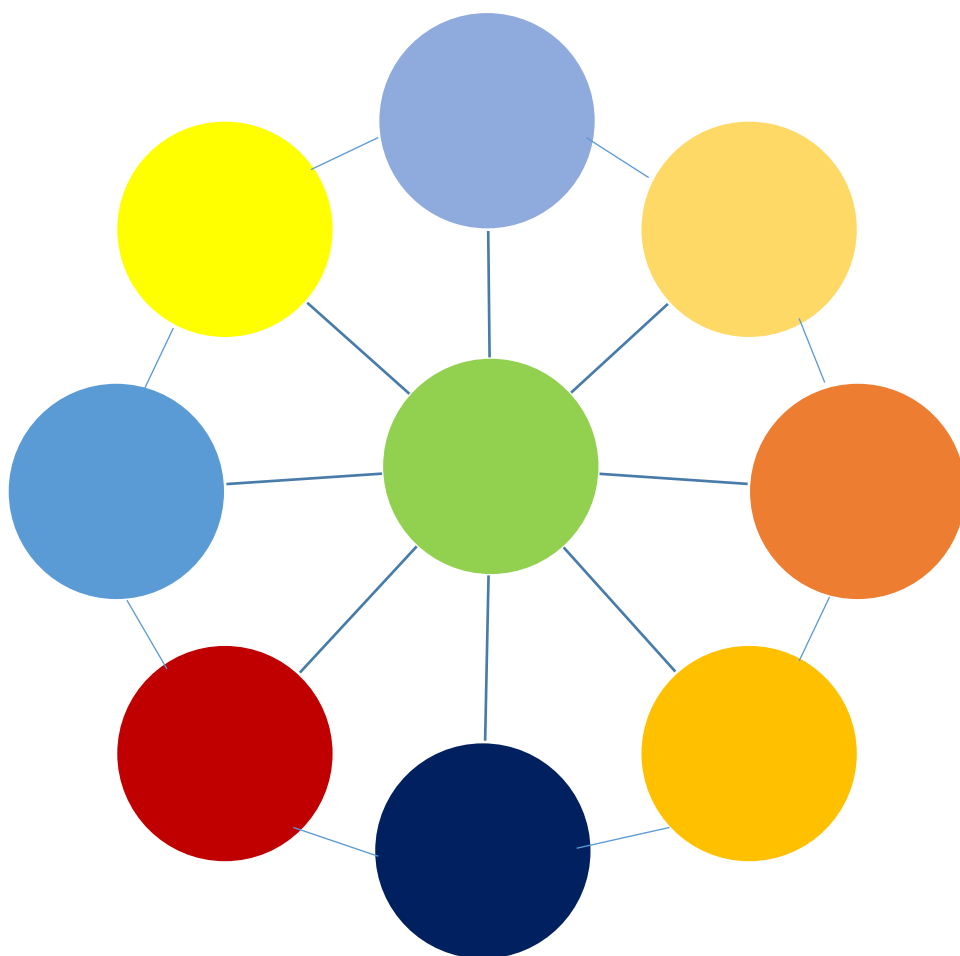


Thriving Communities Think Family and Think Locally

EARLY HELP STRATEGY 2016 – 2018



What is Early Help?

Early Help means providing 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. Herefordshire's Early Help is therefore about providing services at the right time to meet family's needs and to keep them in control of resolving their issues and problems, to reinforce and develop the families' own skills to determine their future, reducing poor outcomes and inequalities. Although research shows that the most impact can be made during a child's early years, Early Help is not just for very young children and we understand that problems may emerge at any point throughout childhood and adolescence.

Why we want Early Help

The Herefordshire approach to Early Help reflects the widespread recognition that it is better to identify and deal with problems early rather than to respond when difficulties have become acute and demand action by statutory or more intensive services. There is now strong evidence of what factors place children at risk of neglect or abuse, of developing mental health problems, of failing in education, or of becoming involved in crime or anti-social behaviour. These negative outcomes damage the children or young people concerned, their families and disrupt communities where they live; and. But also results in significant financial costs.

Our overall aim is therefore to provide early and effective help and support to children and families when they need it, with the long term aim of helping more families in Herefordshire to be able to help themselves' and thus improving their overall well-being and quality of life. To build resilient families who are able to find their own solutions to the challenges that they face. In order for us to be able to help and support children and their families at the earliest stage a range of partners need to work together to plan and deliver services. Strong partnerships that understand the role each agency plays and the impact each service has on supporting families are essential.

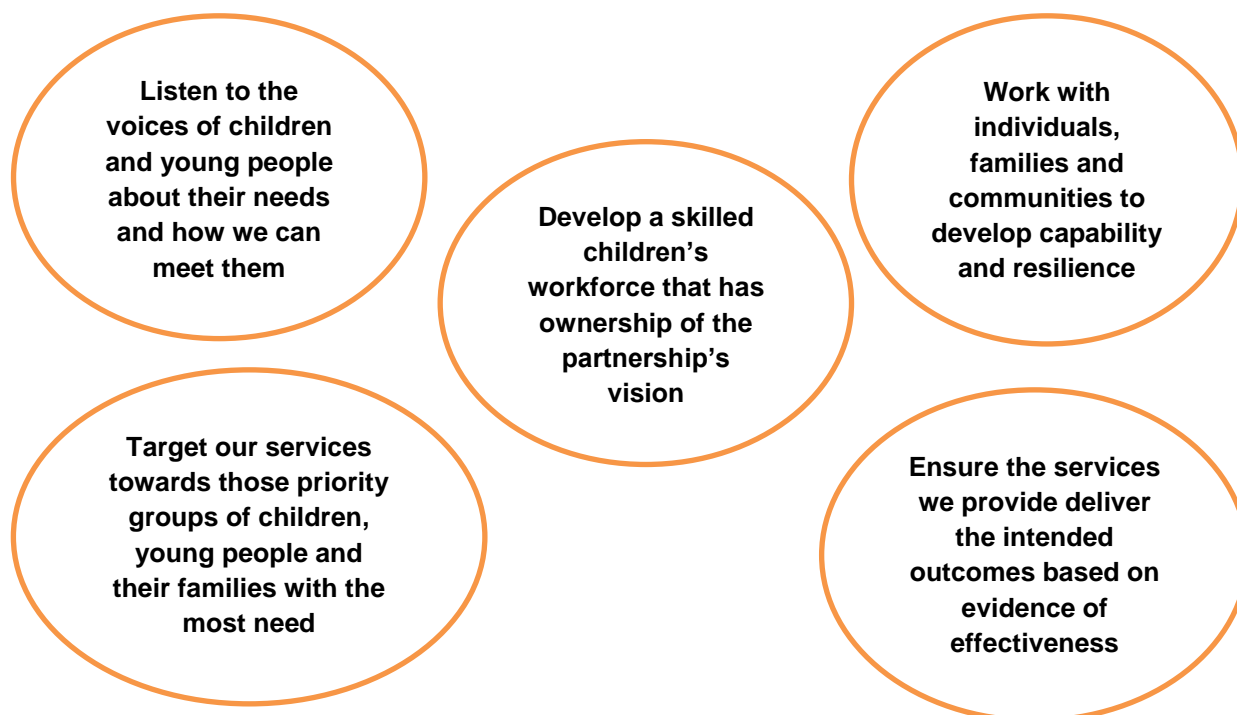
This is what we are going to do

To make the sustainable changes, Herefordshire Council works as part of Herefordshire's Children and Young People's Partnership to facilitate and influence communities and partners to provide effective and coordinated evidenced-based help and support to children and their families at the earliest opportunity. The Herefordshire inter-agency Troubled Families programme, known as Families First, will be central to how we support and deliver early help to families. In practice this means that we will enable children and families to access information, advice and guidance and support them through their own network of contacts, through their local community resources, through multi-media and through contact with public and private services. To support the children and families to work with services to assess their needs and determine the best way to meet them.

The strategy is influenced by a range of national policy and guidance that includes:

- Ofsted – Early Help, whose responsibility? March 2015
- Children’s Acts 1989, 2004, 2014
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 and 2015.
- ‘Think Family’ Evaluation Report
- The Munro Review of Child Protection (May 2011),
- The Graham Allen review on Early Intervention (January 2011)
- The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults (Field, 2010)
- The Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning (Tickell, 2011)
- Marmot Review, 'Fair Society Healthy Lives' (2010)
- Early Support programme for children with disabilities
- Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability (DfE 2011)
- The National Health Visitors Plan - Progress to date (DoH 2013)
- Local Safeguarding Children Board Regulations 2006
- DCLG Troubled Families Programme 2015
- NSPCC, 'Thriving Communities' report 2015

The Herefordshire Partnership approach recognises that to build and enable resilience in families, to ensure appropriate Safeguarding and to reduce the levels of dependence on statutory services we need to work with whole families, not just individuals within the family. The importance of the communities in which families live and work and developing and building relationships based on the family’s links within their Community is also recognised. In order to create a sustainable early help provision that will benefit families and building on the best of the work that is already happening across the county, that includes family support, early years provision, the Wellbeing and Information Signposting for Herefordshire (WISH) hub, health and education support services, a rebalancing of resources across Herefordshire’s multi-agency services must occur. The Herefordshire Children’s Partnership’s vision for Early Help will:



The development of the Partnership's Early Help strategy is at a time of increased financial pressures on all agencies and organisations, including early year's settings, schools, colleges, NHS, public and mental health services, police as well as the council's children and adult services. At the same time there is an increased pressure on the resources with higher numbers entering health and social care settings. These significant cost pressures with capped budgets that require to be absorbed, means that the current resourcing is not sustainable and there is a need to maximise an early help approach that will achieve 'best value'. The Government's national Troubled Families programme also acknowledges this and encourages each authority area to focus on families with multiple high cost problems to make sustainable changes that will make better use of resources.

The Council and partners provide statutory safeguarding services and these will continue. However, there are different ways to commission and provide services that contribute to early help, as well as providing social care support to children and young people experiencing the highest levels of problems and vulnerabilities. An NSPCC vision statement in their 'Thriving Communities' report (2015) states that, "A concerted shift to prevention where everyone – children, parents, communities, universal services and local government – works together to help children thrive...". This underpins the Herefordshire's partnership approach to support and develop early help provision in our communities - to Think Family and Think Locally.

Herefordshire's Early Help Key Messages

- Think Independence
- Think Family
- Think Whole System
- Promotion of Whole Well being
- Flexible Workforce
- Make Every Contact Count

One of the priorities of the children and young people's plan is the development of an Early Help Strategy. Alongside national policies and guidance the strategy also cross-references and contributes to a range of the partnership's policies, guidance and strategies, with each agency having their own referral and service delivery pathways that will be integrated across their Early Help provisions:

- Health and Wellbeing Strategy, with its four key priorities:
 - Giving every child the best start in life
 - Helping vulnerable children and families
 - Empowering communities to take better care of themselves
 - Improving mental wellbeing throughout their lives
- Children and Young Peoples Plan, 2015-18
- Herefordshire's LSCB annual report and business plan, 2015
- Public Health Outcomes
- Child Poverty Strategy,
- Strategic Plan for Education for Children and Young People in Herefordshire
- Housing Strategy
- Children with disabilities Transformation programme
- Care Placement Strategy
- Health Strategies

- Criminal Justice and Community Safety strategies
- Information Sharing protocol
- Thresholds of Need guidance

Herefordshire Early Help Approach

Herefordshire's Early Help approach is an integrated community focussed multi-agency programme which sets out to provide *effective step up and step down systems and processes* using Universal services and building on the community resources and capacity to:

- fundamentally improve the way that services are identified and delivered to the county's most vulnerable children and their families.
- build upon existing provision to ensure a more robust and coordinated range of Early Help services across the county that are easier to navigate for both families and practitioners.
- maximise a multi-disciplinary/multi-agency approach to family help.

To do this, based on Herefordshire's Thresholds of Need, we will support the development and co-ordination of the Level 1, Universal and Levels 2 and 3 early intervention activities in communities. Sharing information, best practice and training to enable services to target areas of need. The development of the Wellbeing Information and Signposting for Herefordshire – WISH, will form a core resource of early help to families in their communities.

The Herefordshire Early Help approach will meet the needs of vulnerable families by working with them to tackle underlying problems and build their resilience, through:

- supporting the development of a robust and coherent set of Early Help services, that is targeted at the right level of support;
- offering co-ordinated multi-agency support to respond to Safeguarding concerns and the needs of each family on an individual basis;
- meeting Herefordshire's commitment to the Families First/Troubled Families programme;
- reducing the workload pressures on social care services by offering alternative ways to support families;

The Early Help provided will be:

Family focused – and designed to address the issues of the whole household in a holistic way;

Community Focussed – drawing on the strengths and services in each locality

Targeted – to ensure the right level of support at the right time;

Multi-agency – to reflect the complex and multi-faceted issues that families can often face;

Aimed at building resilience in families, to provide them with the tools and skills to help and support themselves in the future.

The Herefordshire Early Help approach is available for families with children aged 0-19 years old and up to 25 years old for Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and is responsive to family needs. The families who will benefit most from our Early Help offer have needs which fit within Levels 2 and 3 of Herefordshire's Thresholds of Need with the ethos that the right level of

support is available at the right time. We will have a 'Think Family and Think Locally' approach, to work with families, "doing with" rather than "doing for" or "doing to" and includes the principles that:

- families will be empowered to identify their own problems, needs and solutions wherever possible all the children and their families' needs will be met within (level 1) Universal settings.
- it is a multi-agency and county wide approach
- will take a 'Think Family' approach that will:
 - offer an 'open door' into a system of joined-up support
 - take a whole family approach with a Team Around the Family (TAF)
 - provide support that is tailored to need and will build on family strengths.
- effective interventions are dependent on good assessments, planning, achieving and reviewing.

Herefordshire's Levels of Need Thresholds and Key Principles

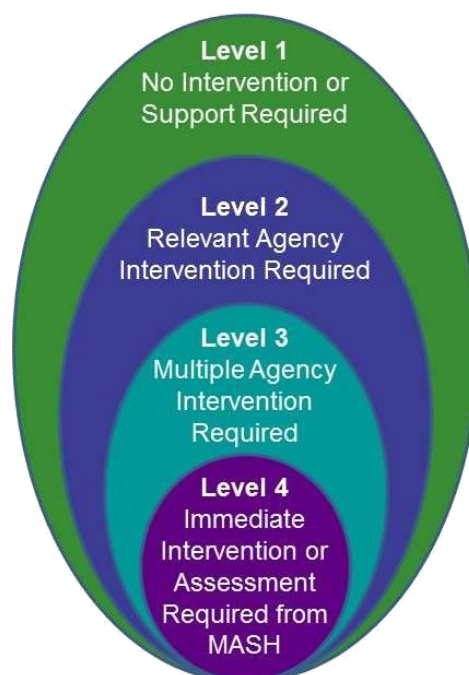
To provide accurate assessments and target resources appropriately for children and their families, the Early Help offer aligns with the Herefordshire four 'Levels of Need Thresholds':

Level 1 – Universal; Children making good overall progress in all areas of their development, receiving appropriate universal services such as health and education.

Level 2 – Early Intervention; Children, young people and families are experiencing emerging problems, whose needs require some targeted support. They are likely to require early help / intervention for a time limited period, to help them move back to Level 1.

Level 3 – Complex/Family Intervention 'Light'; Children, young people and families with identified vulnerabilities who are experiencing significant additional complex needs and are likely to require a more targeted, multi-agency coordinated approach with possible longer term intervention.

Level 4 – Acute/Family Intervention 'Plus'; Children, young people and families who are experiencing very serious or complex needs that are having a major impact on their expected outcomes or there is extreme concern for their safety. These acute needs may require statutory intensive support.



Information Sharing

Effective information sharing through the governance of the Herefordshire Information Sharing protocol will underpin the practice and success of the Early Help strategy. Organisations involved in providing services to the public have a legal responsibility to ensure that their use of personal information is lawful, properly controlled and that an individual's rights are respected. The balance between the need to share information to provide a quality service and protection of confidentiality is often difficult to achieve. This will be achieved by obtaining a balance between the need to share information and to provide a quality service and the protection of confidentiality. This ensures that those accessing early help services and the data collected to identify families and their needs, will have their confidentiality maintained.

This is how we are going to do it

Our Early Help approach will be based on a locality-community focussed approach that will include working with families. Recognising and building on local resources to ensure timely support to families when they need it. This will be centred on a 'Thriving Community', Community Hub model that links directly with the Herefordshire four Levels of Need thresholds. The Community Hubs will be based on a multi-agency approach where there will be an alignment of services and pathways within each locality, co-ordinated through 'Family Network Meetings'. These will review referrals, coordinate and deliver support and services. Partners' cross-cutting strategies will have their own referral and service delivery pathways which will be integrated with the Early Help offer.

The aligned partner agency services include:

- Family Support
- Families First / Troubled Families programme
- Early Years Provision
- Parenting support programmes
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) 0-25 services
- Schools
- Employment & training including those young people defined as NEET
- Health including:
 - Public Health
 - Health Visitors
 - School Nursing
 - GPs
 - Adult Mental Health
 - CAMHS
- Youth strategy as part of the Children and Young Peoples Plan
- Community Safety, addressing issues of Domestic Violence and Anti-social Behaviour
- Adults Wellbeing service arrangements

WISH - Wellbeing Information and Signposting for Herefordshire

WISH is a service provided by Herefordshire Council in partnership with Services for Independent Living (SIL) and is available to everyone. The WISH service will provide universal information online, by phone or face to face for Herefordshire to provide a wide range of information and guidance. It is a comprehensive directory of services and activities that support the wellbeing of adults, children, young people and families as well as a range of activities that are happening in local communities across Herefordshire.

Families First / Troubled Families Programme

Central to and fully integrated with Herefordshire's Early Help is the Families First/Troubled Families programme. This programme will carry out work with a broad range of families usually within the levels 2 and 3 of the Thresholds of Need but also with a number of families considered at the Level 4 who have more complex needs. Families identified for support will meet at least two of the six main headline issues:

1. Parents and children involved in crime and anti-social behaviour
2. Children who have not been attending school regularly
3. Children who need help
4. Adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion, and young people at risk of worklessness
5. Families affected by domestic violence and abuse
6. Parents and children with a range of health problems

It will ensure that,

- there will have been an assessment that takes into account the needs of the whole family;
- there will be a Family Action Plan that takes account of all (relevant) family members;
- there will be a lead worker for the family that is recognised by the family and other professionals involved with the family;
- provide an intensive, flexible response that allows for support outside traditional working hours with an 'assertive and persistent' family key worker.
- that 'step-down' arrangements to services and support are accessed.

Achievement of outcomes for families against this framework will ensure that significant and sustained improvement for that family has been achieved. However families will be monitored for a longer period of time after an intervention has ended because sometimes situations arise in families that can cause a re-escalation of issues. Recognising that it is better to catch those issues quickly to resolve them before they reach any crisis point.

This is how we are going to do it

Building on the core ethos of the Families First service and WISH, we will work with families to ensure

- strengths-based family assessments,
- robust family agreements with a focus on improved parenting (outcomes) and
- the use of evidence-based support and interventions.

The Herefordshire Early Help services will be coordinated and commissioned on a multi-agency basis and focused on the needs of communities around the county, with an emphasis on the development and use of the Universal services within each area. These will be coordinated through a number of Community Hubs which uses a multi-agency Team Around the Family (TAF) approach that has a family keyworker model at its heart. The TAF approach will bring together through the community hubs, using family network meetings that will consist of a multi-disciplinary team of practitioners working and volunteering in that locality to support a child, young person or family to ensure:

- that the family is at the core of the family network meetings
- a joined-up assessment and plan using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)
- a Lead Professional coordinates the work
- the child or young person and their family are at the centre of the process
- that a support plan meets the identified needs of the child or young person.

To enable this we will:

- provide better information, advice and guidance so families can help themselves rather than relying on services,
- be proactive in the use of data and intelligence to target resources
- provide targeted and specialist services for the most vulnerable families whilst ensuring and supporting whilst making sure that universal services to be effective and resilient
- focus on self-reliance, personalisation, choice and control

Commissioning

To support these aims the Partnership will commission services to decide how to use and prioritise the resources available to deliver better outcomes in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way. To develop the universal market in Herefordshire for services for children that support early help and intervention so the demand for services at higher levels of need are reduced. The design of the Early Help provision will prevent families escalating to higher levels of safeguarding need, and reduce the demand for public sector services; whilst improving sustainable outcomes. The principles that underpin all our commissioning of services will ensure that:

- the services will make a tangible positive difference to the lives of children and their families
- safeguarding and quality is at the heart of the commissioning process and in commissioned services
- we focus on commissioning for outcomes, rather than commissioning of services
- we improve experiences for children, young people and their families and their involvement in all aspects of the commissioning process and service redesign
- commissioning decisions are based on clear evidence of local need, best practice and innovation in service delivery and effective services that provide value for money.
- we encourage and support individuals, communities and organisations to do more for themselves and their local area

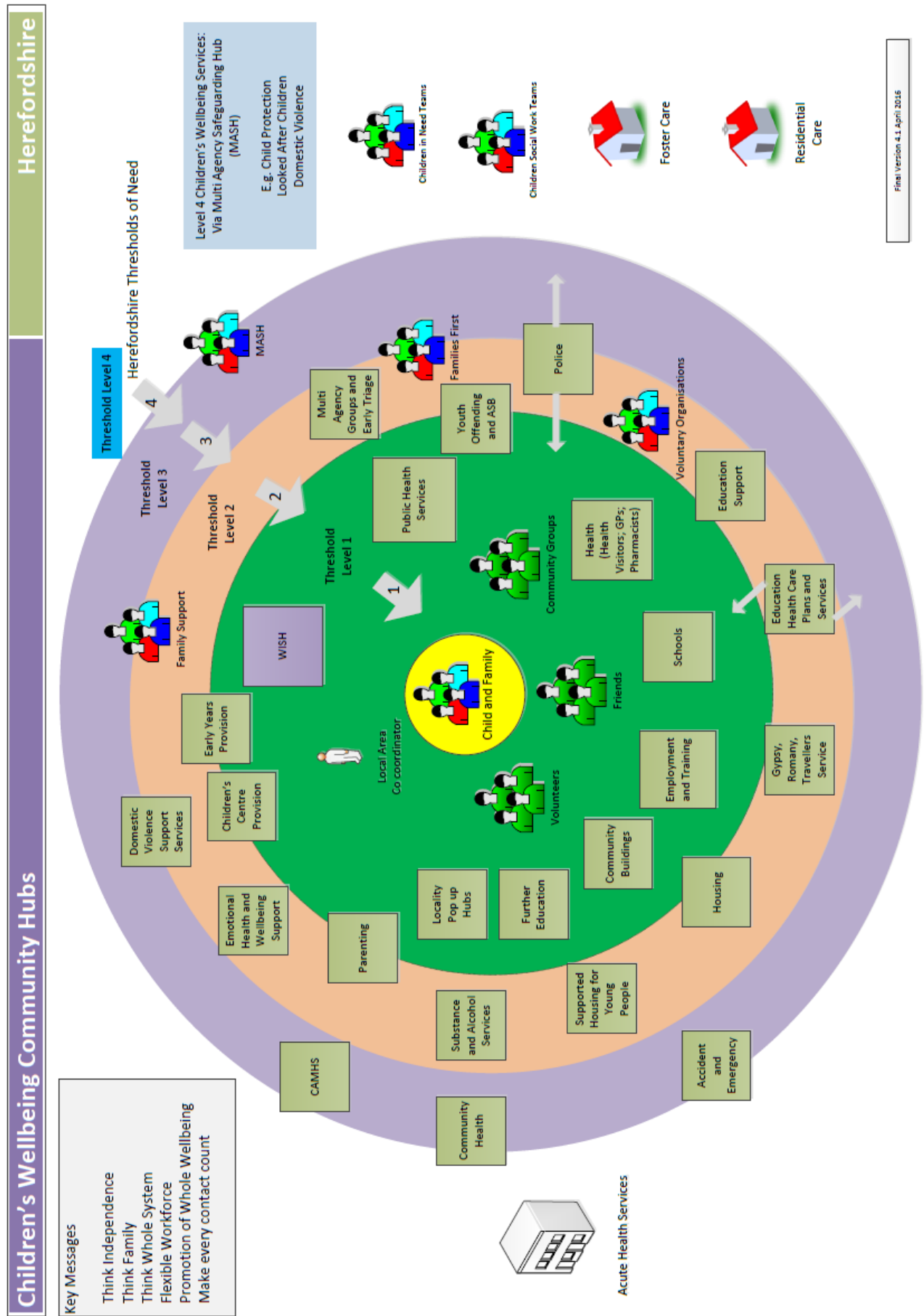
Locality Hubs

The hubs will be a local base for the coordination of work with children, young people and families. Based on the level 2 and 3 of the Thresholds of Need, there will be Community Hubs across the County with the aim of responding to the particular Community needs. The locality family network meetings will coordinate their work from those Hubs. The vision is that staff from the core partner agencies, aligned services along with local community providers will work together to address the needs of (whole) families from community bases. With the aim of delivering contact and services from local venues such as community centres, church halls and children's centres. Whichever is central and accessible to each Community (Fig 1).

Family Network Meetings

The locality based family network meetings will identify and co-ordinate support for children, young people, families and carers who have a completed Common Assessment Framework (CAF). They play a crucial role in the integration of services to provide early intervention and prevent needs escalating. An effective family network meeting will have ownership and commitment from key professionals working in each locality. Representatives from the core agencies, aligned services and organisations whose focus is on the outcomes and achievements of children and young people will attend this meeting on a regular basis. Their role will be two-fold, they will provide an initial local point of contact for Early Help support and provide a triage role to identify what (local) support can be provided to the family. They will identify a lead professional/key worker and agree a family plan. The child and family's inclusion and views are central to any decisions. Additionally the family network meeting will provide a forum for review of the family plan and the support it provides.

Fig 1. Community Hub Model



The Child and Family CAF (Common Assessment Framework)

In order to be in a position to intervene at the earliest point and target help and support in a way that makes a difference to the lives of families, a good quality assessment is required. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is part of the council's strategy to provide help to families at the earliest point of identification and reduce the need for more costly interventions and reliance on more specialist interventions. The CAF provides a common approach, and a holistic assessment of the needs of families which will be meaningful to them as they have been supported to tell their story and agree on an action plan to meet their individual needs.

The child and family CAF is therefore central to the work of the Early Help approach. It focuses on the risks to and needs of all family members and supports families to identify their own solutions. The CAF will be used to assess, plan and review work, together with families enabling clear objectives to be set and worked towards. The CAF can also be used as a referral, when concerns increase about a child and family and support is needed to 'step-up' to the 'higher level' social care services.

The Lead Professional (Key Worker) Role

For those families identified as needing support, Key and Lead Workers will act as the main contact within a given family at any one time. With the aim of ensuring one family, one worker, one plan. Using the Family Action Plan they will provide day to day support and help families to make sense of an often complicated and confusing landscape of service provision. They will do this by co-ordinating a package of support from a range of aligned family support services that exist across the county. The Lead Professional will be required to;

- Build a relationship with the family using a whole family, locality-based approach
- Be persistent and assertive
- Deliver evidence-based solutions and coordinate the support needed from other agencies, providing practical support.
- Put robust agreements in place using CAF or family agreement
- Provide a flexible response that includes support outside traditional hours
- empower families to develop the capacity to resolve their own problems
- Tailor interventions to the specific family needs
- Collect appropriate information and data, record well, evaluate with the family, monitor appropriately.

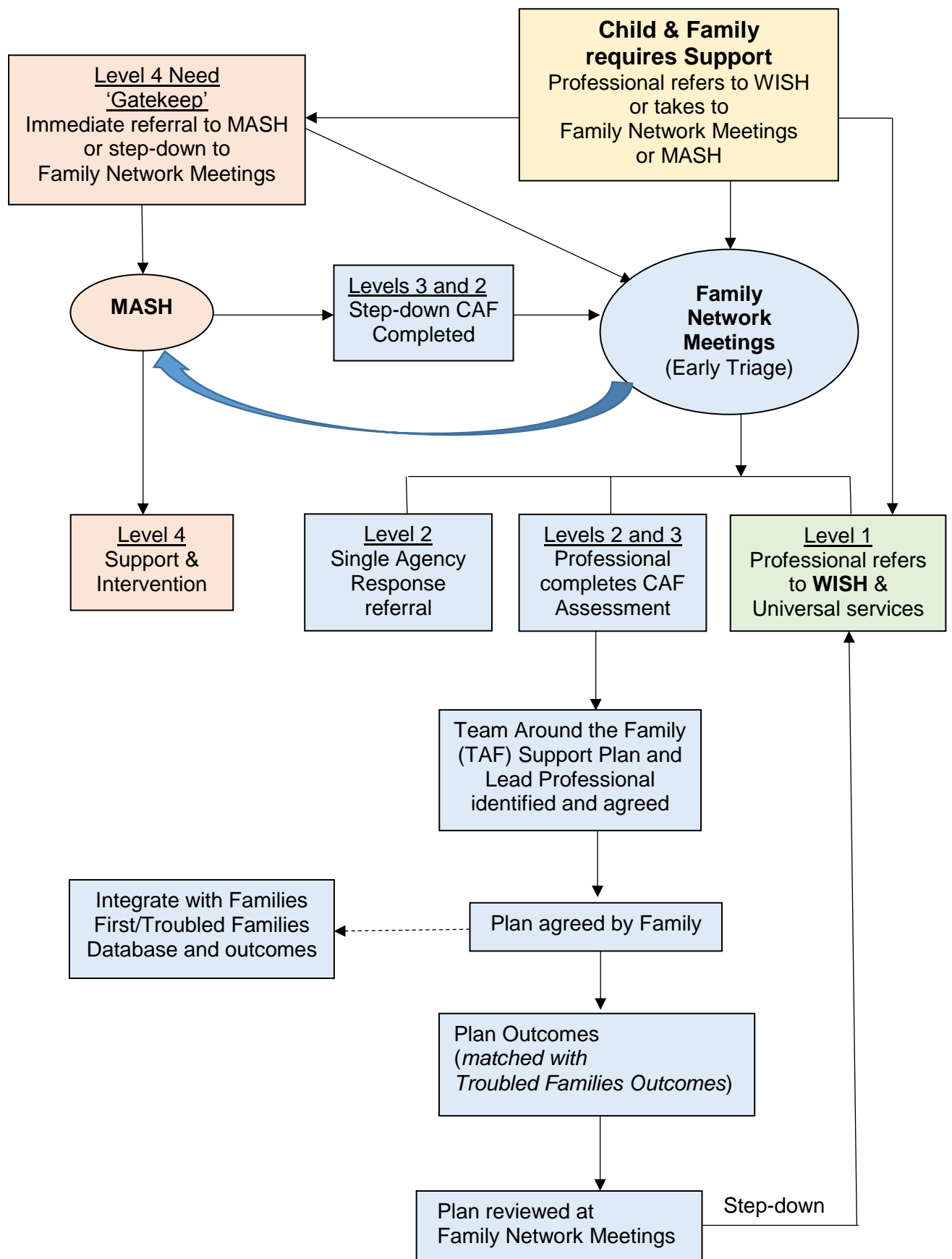
Voice of the child and family

Throughout the process of working with families will be the integration of the voice of the child and that of the family. Central to the Early Help approach will be the engagement with the family to understand their needs and work with them to resolve the issues that affect them. This will mean ensuring their full engagement in identifying the support that they require at every stage of their involvement.

Early Help Community Support Model

Outlined below (Fig 2) is the Community Support Model that illustrates the process of where and how professionals and organisations ensure that families, can identify where they can get the support they need, outlining a typical journey of a child and family accessing the Early Help community support:

Fig 2. Community Support Model



Progress and Outcomes

Through the work of the Early Help strategy we will achieve the outcomes identified within the Children and Young People's Plan will be achieved by 2018 and Troubled Families outcomes by 2020. Therefore we will have improved the early identification and response to critical issues ensuring that we are helping the most vulnerable families as early as possible. Universal services will be in place which work in conjunction with targeted models of effective intervention. Our approach will be to working with whole families to address their issues and concerns.

The focus and emphasis of the Early Help strategy will use the Family Outcomes Framework as the benchmark. The outcomes for Troubled Families programme forms the basis of the Framework, to ensure and achieve against the six expected outcomes:

- Parents and children involved in crime and anti-social behaviour
- Children who have not been attending school
- Children who need help
- Adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion, and young people at risk of worklessness
- Families affected by domestic violence and abuse
- Parents and children with a range of health problems

These outcomes are also attached to the DCLG Payment by Results (PbR) providing potential further funding to Herefordshire and contributing to the early help service transformation. Through the use of the DCLG's Troubled Families cost calculator we will be able to calculate and identify savings and cost avoidance across the partnership. It is also recognised that the current levels of Child Protection referrals and plans and the number of Looked After Children are at an 'overheated' level and achieving against the Early Help outcomes, whilst not leading to an immediate reduction in those numbers, it is expected that they will reduce over time and therefore lead to a reduction in the wider costs to the system.

We will develop a range of Early Help and prevention key impact indicators that directly reflect the outcomes measured through the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Board, Children's Services and the Early Years and Family Support Services and aligned with partner agency outcomes including Public and Mental Health. An Early Help scorecard has been developed to monitor the effectiveness of Early Help services delivered or commissioned by the Council and Partners. The impact indicators and outcomes will include:

- Numbers families referred and received Early Help
- How are families entering Early Help services
- Number of Families First/Troubled Families that have been worked with
- Number of Families First/Troubled Families where outcomes have been achieved
- Family Network meetings - geographical referral numbers
- Partner agency outcomes including Public Health, Police, Youth Offending Service, Health
- Breakdown of referrals in Community Hubs
- Number of Family Network Meetings Triage (to whom, to where and timescales)
- Identified lead professional by agency
- Progress against Children and Families equality objectives

Quality Assurance

Our Quality Assurance Framework will include quantitative as well as qualitative measures of outcomes and success, identifying standards that will be expected to be met by both Council and aligned agency services. It will enable continuous improvement in the way that services are provided to children and families. As part of this, staff will be well supported, through a thorough induction and regular supervision. A systematic programme of case audit will be an integral part of the framework, with the purpose of not only checking whether essential requirements are being met, but to lift the quality of practice. Ensuring that programme thresholds are working and being met and for example, step up and step-down down arrangements are being used appropriately and efficiently. We will also take the views and opinions of the services from the families we work with to help us improve the way we deliver our Early Help offer and engage with those families.

