

# Early Help and Prevention Strategy

March 2023



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# Introduction

The Herefordshire and Prevention and Early Help strategy sets out our ambition to strengthen our prevention and early help provision within local communities.

The strategy is aligned to the Children & Young People's Plan 2019 – 2024, **Children and Young People's Plan** – Herefordshire Council the aim of which is to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families and to contribute to the safeguarding of children and young people. The four pledges that drive the Herefordshire Children and Young People' Plan are:

1. Keeping children and young people safe – BE SAFE FROM HARM
2. Improving children and young people's health and wellbeing – BE HEALTHY
3. Helping ALL children and young people succeed – BE AMAZING
4. Ensuring that children and young people are influential in our communities – FEEL PART OF THE COMMUNITY

Herefordshire Children's Services Improvement Plan (IP) focusses on ten key priority areas considered crucial to delivering the change needed to ensure that children are well supported and safeguarded in Herefordshire.

**Improvement plan (Appendix B)** Priority area 1.3 of the IP to 'Re-establish the Children and Young People's Partnership (CYPP) to create a multi-agency/cross sector forum to develop an Early Help offer with families'.

Research shows that effective preventative services offer children, young people and families help before any problems arise or when low level problems emerge. Our ambition in Herefordshire is to ensure that children and young people receive the Right Help at the Right Time in order to reduce the likelihood of adverse childhood experiences.

# Vision

Herefordshire Children's Services have worked alongside children, young people, families, community, faith & the voluntary sector and partner agencies to create a shared vision that maximises opportunities to access the right help at the right time.

**Working together to ensure Herefordshire is a great place for families to thrive and that our children and young people get the best start in life**

In order to reach families at the very earliest point that they may require help we are working with our community, voluntary and faith sector to enable help to be available wrapped around universal provision. Providing help to prevent escalation of needs will also be part of our ambition to enable families and communities to remain independent of statutory services, meaning only those that really need to have statutory intervention do so.

We are exploring a new way of working called Community Paradigm. Empowering communities involves public services reaching a different understanding of power. It recognises that when your overarching goal is to prevent illness, crime, or personal crisis arising in the first place, then power needs to be 'shared' with individuals and communities. Prevention can ultimately only be successful when those at risk of illness, crime or crisis take the necessary steps to prevent it themselves, with the supportive influence of communities and networks around them. We are keen to shift resources in to those communities to help facilitate early prevention and support.

# What is prevention?

Prevention, in its simplest terms, can be defined as “the action of stopping something from happening or arising”. Research shows that effective preventative services offer children, young people and families help before any problems arise or when low level problems emerge. From a child or young person’s point of view the earlier they receive help the less likely they are to undergo adverse experiences. (Munro, 2011)

In Herefordshire, Prevention refers to universal and community help being offered at the right time in order to increase the protective factors and decrease the risk factors facing children, young people and families. Preventing problems from occurring or offering help quickly helps to build resilience in families, promotes safety and wellbeing and ultimately reduces the need for involvement more specialist services.

# What is early help?

“Providing Early Help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early Help means providing support or services as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child’s life..... Early Help can also prevent further problems arising”. Working Together (2018)

## Early help is Everyone’s responsibility

Local authorities, under section 10 of the Children Act 2004 [5], have a responsibility to develop joined up early help services based on local needs. However collaborative inter-agency working is essential to improving the welfare of all children. Effective Early Help relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to: Identify children and families who would benefit from early help, undertake an Early Help

Assessment and provide targeted Early Help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family.

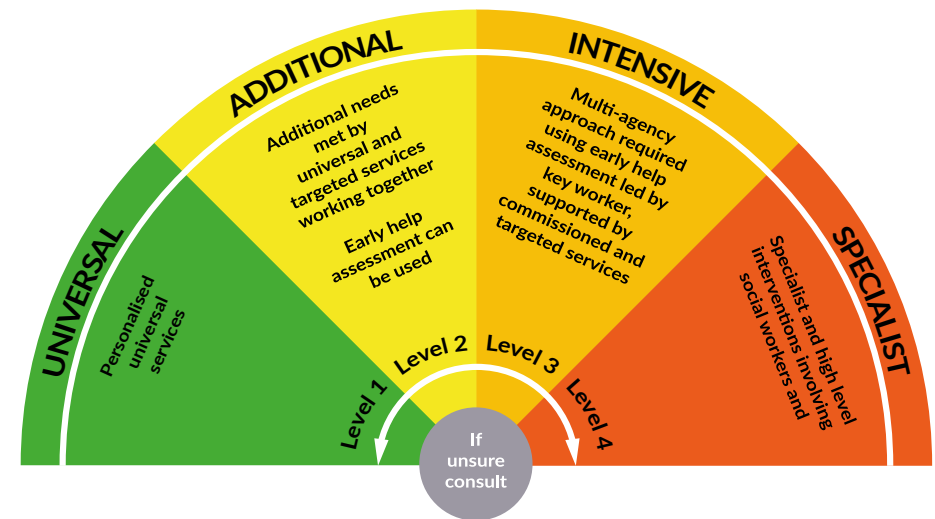
In Herefordshire this means keeping the child or young person at the centre of our decision making and offering the Right Help at the Right Time to meet their needs.

# Right help right time

Most children will have their day to day needs met by their parents or carers and from within their own community. These children will have access to universal services that are there for everyone.

For some children and their families there are times when they will require additional or intensive help and support and a smaller number of children may require specialist intervention, including protection from likely or actual significant harm.

The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership have developed the Right Help Right Time Levels of Need framework to help practitioners and partner agencies to gain a collective understanding of how to



identify need and offer the Right Help to enable children and young people to achieve their potential Herefordshire Right Help Right Time Levels of Need guidance

The Continuum of need sets out the 4 levels of need used to ensure the right help is provided to children and families at the right time.

## Why is early help important?

Early Help can offer children the support needed to reach their full potential. It can improve the quality of a child's home and family life, enable them to perform better at school and support their mental health. (EIF, 2021). Furthermore research shows that that Early Help offered at the right time can:

Protect children and young people from harm

Improve children's long term outcomes

Reduce the need for a referral to specialist services

## National context

Nationally several high profile reviews highlight the importance and need for early help for families. These include:

- The Field Review on preventing generational poverty (2010)
- The Allen review on intervening early in a child's life (2011)
- The Munro review of children's care services (2011)

All describe the significance of identifying needs early on and how preventative work can maximise opportunities to give children the best start in life and prevent problems from developing and impacting on life experiences.

Graham Allen's review 'Early Intervention: The Next Steps' (2011) paved the way for an independent Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) to be established. The EIF's most recent strategy (2018 - 2023) validates the pivotal role of Early Help in helping children and young people reach their full potential.

HM Government's report The Best for Life (2021) acknowledges that The 1,001 days from pregnancy to the age of two are critical in setting "the foundations for an individual's cognitive, emotional and physical development". Furthermore the mental health and wellbeing of mums, dads, partners and carers is highlighted as an important factor in a baby's development. The review identified several catalysts to ensuring the best start in life.

**"Science tells us that a child's experiences from conception through their first five years will go on to shape their next 50. It tells us that the kind of children we raise today, will reflect the kind of world we will live in tomorrow" (Knouf, 2020)**

### Families have access to the services they need

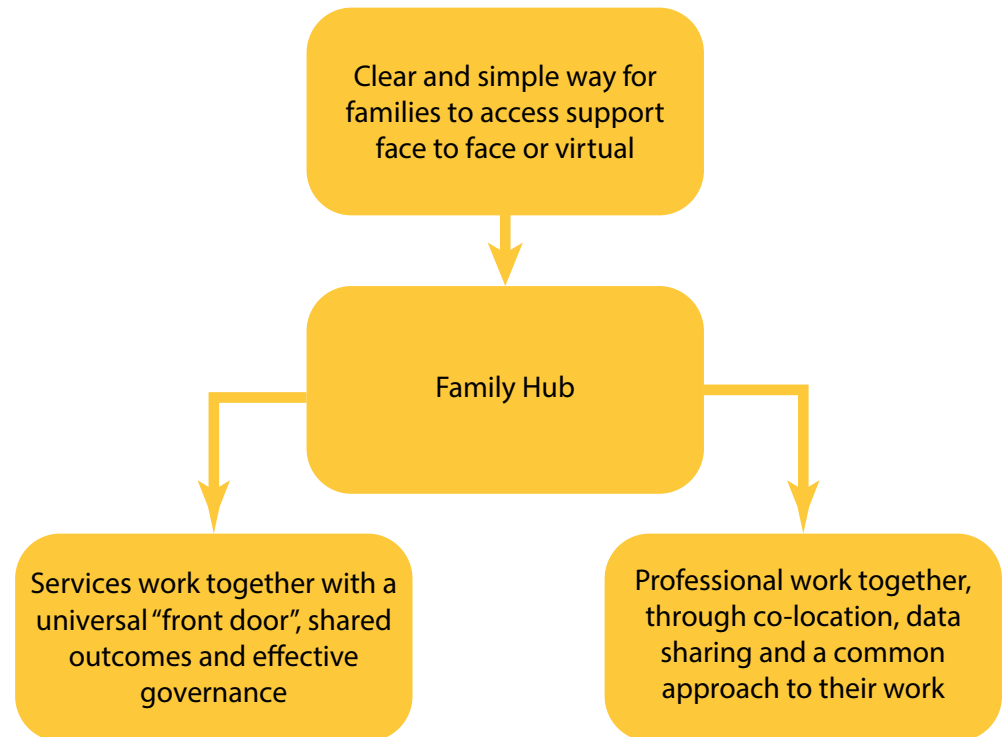
1. Seamless support for families: a joined up Start for Life offer available to all families.
2. A welcoming hub for families: Family Hubs as a place for families to access Start for Life services.
3. The information families need when they need it: designing digital, virtual and telephone offers around the needs of the family

# National context-family hubs

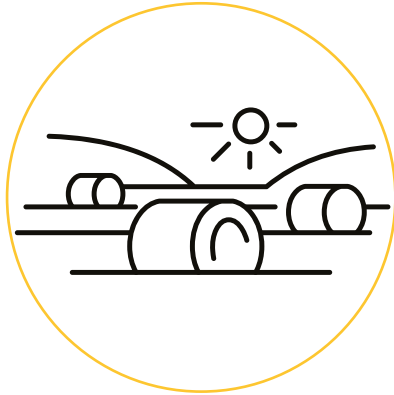
The Government advocate Family Hubs as a key driver of its vision for the Best Start in Life. A National Centre for Family Hubs has been established and is led by the Anna Freud Centre. **National Centre for Family Hubs**

A Family Hub is a system-wide model of providing high-quality, whole-family, joined up family support services. Family Hubs deliver these support services from pregnancy, through the child's early years and later childhood, and into early adulthood until they reach the age of 19 (or up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities).

Relationships are at the heart of everything that is delivered in Family Hubs and the approach builds on family strengths. Each Family Hub will be unique and bespoke to the local community it serves, however there are three key delivery principles that should be reflected in all Family Hubs:



# Local context - what is it like to live in Herefordshire



Herefordshire is a predominately rural county, with the fourth lowest population density in England (89 people per square kilometre)



As of mid 2020 Herefordshire resident population was estimated to be 193,600. Migration has been the sole driver of the population growth since the early 90's

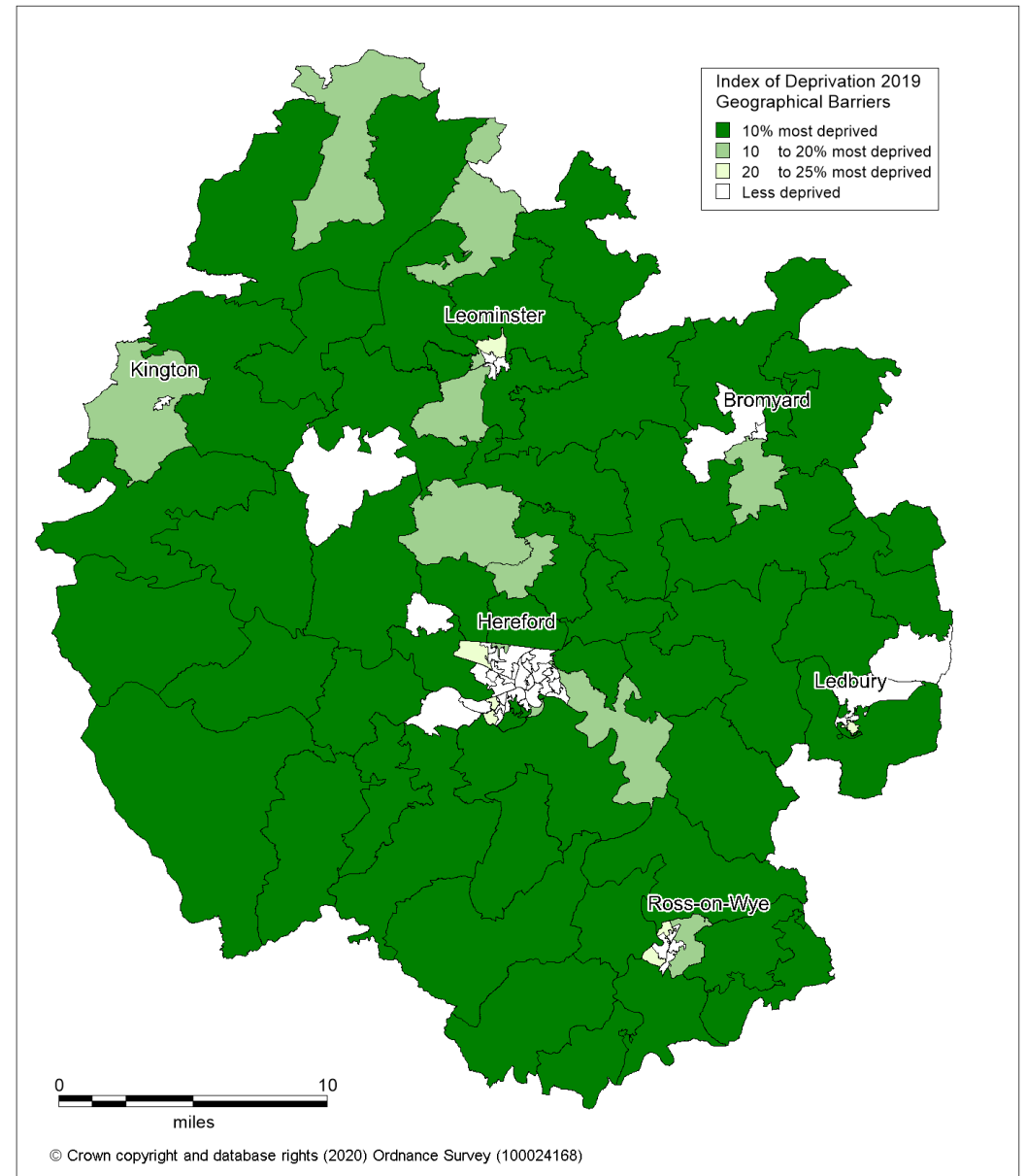


The county has relatively older age structures compared with the national figures with a quarter of the population aged 65 or over. Number of older people are set to continue growing at a higher rate than younger age groups

Whilst Herefordshire is widely regarded as being an affluent county, this masks issues of deprivation, poverty and a continued widening of the gap between the most and least deprived

Close to two thirds of the county are amongst the 25% most deprived in England with respect to geographical barriers to services and the average income of residents is significantly below the regional and national averages

There are pockets of severe deprivation in parts of Hereford and Leominster, as well as potentially 'hidden' deprivation in rural areas. Newton Farm in Hereford City is recognised as the most disadvantaged in the county and is the only 10% SOA





Herefordshire is home to around 35, 900 young people aged under 18, this is projected to rise to 37,000 by 2025. Home - Understanding Herefordshire

Area*plus surrounding areas	0-15	%age for named area
Hereford City	11,500	19%
Leominster	2,100	18%
Ross	1,800	16%
Ledbury	1,600	16%
Kington	500	15%
Bromyard	800	17%
Other Urban/Fringe *	1,400	18%
Rural Village/Dispersed	12,000	15%
Herefordshire Total	31,800	17%

## Education

Children in Herefordshire generally do well throughout school compared to children across England. 22% of schools are rated as Outstanding, 74% as good and only 4% require improvement. However some groups who do less well than their peers due to a range of factors such as the family environment and the neighbourhood in which they live. In terms of social mobility Herefordshire is ranked 271 out of 324 Local Authorities

The proportion of children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) achieving a good level of development by the by the end of reception year, almost doubled to 59% between 2014 and 2017. However there is still a notable gap when their achievement is compared to children not eligible for FSM. This figure is 77% locally and 73% nationally. For older children 34% achieved the expected standard at GCSE, slightly lower that the national average of 37%. Current data shows that 6.5% of Herefordshire's 16 and

17 years olds are NEET, very slightly above the national average.

There remains a gap locally and nationally for children with SEND and children in Herefordshire with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) and eligible for FSM do not make as much progress as their peers nationally.

## HEALTH

In Herefordshire one in ten six year olds and one in five 11 years are considered obese on the BMI. In 2019 reception age children with a combined proportion of obese and overweight BMI's was 23.7% and in year 6 the figure was 47%. Furthermore **Herefordshire's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment - Understanding Herefordshire** identifies that; Obesity doubles between ages 4-5 (10%) and 10-11 (20%) in Herefordshire

The oral health of children in Herefordshire is consistently poor when compared to the rest of England, this has not improved in the last 10 years. Almost a third of 5 year olds have some signs of tooth decay, this is amongst the highest 25% in the country.

**Health and wellbeing strategy – Herefordshire Council** has identified 7 priorities which include:

- Mental health and wellbeing and the development of resilience in children, young people and adults
- For children starting well with pregnancy, maternal health, smoking in pregnancy, 0-5 immunisations, breastfeeding, dental health, pre-school checks, children with disabilities, young offenders, young people not in education, employment or training, looked after children

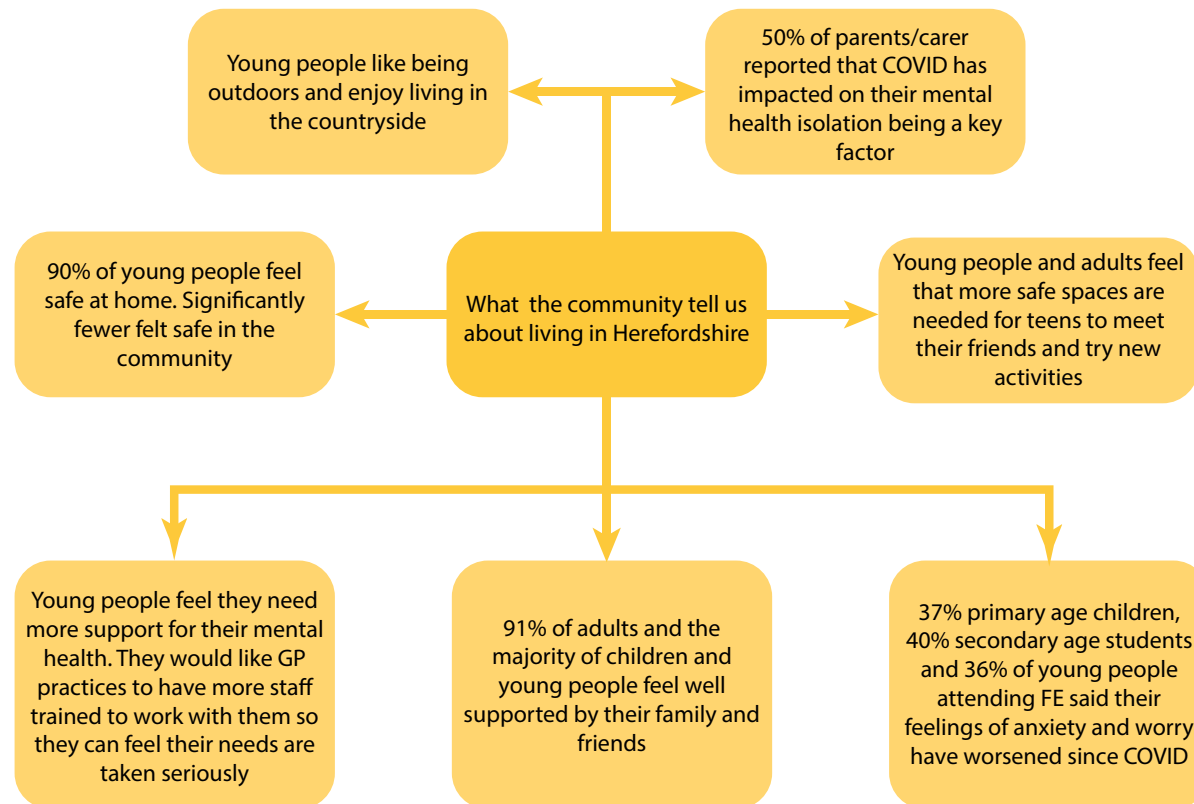
Prevention and self-help are highlighted as key drivers to improvement within the Health and wellbeing strategy.

# Children and young person's voice - what is it like to live in Herefordshire?

Anyone working with children should see and speak to the child; listen to what they say; take their views seriously; and work with them and their families collaboratively when deciding how to support their needs. Working Together, 2018

Herefordshire recognises the importance of gaining the child's voice and lived experience and the Signs of Safety approach is embedded in our work with children, young people and families. Signs of Safety is a strength based approach that supports family members and professionals to work together to meet children and young people's needs in the best way possible. It puts children, young people and their parents at the heart of the work.

Through initiatives such as Let's Talk Children and Families Project (2022) and the Children's and Young People Quality of Life Survey (2021) we have gained the views of almost 5000 school age children and over 1000 responses from parents and carers. This is what they tell us about living in Herefordshire.



# Specialist early help family support services currently provided Herefordshire Council

Herefordshire Council Early Help Team sits under the Children and Young People Directorate and consists of 70 staff lead by the Head of Service for Early Help. The team provide specialist support, all of which is underpinned by the Supporting Families programmes and team. The main functions and processes of each team can be found in the Early Help Practice Framework.

## The Children's Help and Advice Team (CHAT)

The Early Help Hub is now called the CHAT Team (Children's help and advice team) has been established to improve communication, information sharing and to support more effective delivery of services where there is a need for multi-agency responses. The team are embedded in the MASH working in close partnership with partner agencies, other professionals, children, young people and families. CHAT screen all EH contact in line with the Right Help Right Time levels of Need and ensure that children and families received the appropriate level of response for their need.

What has worked well...?

**The CHAT Advice has helped us all to communicate better at home**

**After talking to CHAT my child now has the right support in place at school**

**Prevention:** Between April 2021 and March 2022 the CHAT supported just over 3500 children and young people. On average just over 50% of contacts are screened with an outcome of advice, guidance, signposting and the right support in place (levels 1 and 2). A further 15% are recommended as level 3 with an EHA as the outcome. Quarterly feedback shows that the majority of families are really happy with the service they received.

## The early help co-ordinators

The Early Help Co-ordinators team work in partnership with the CHAT, MASH, social workers, professionals, partner agencies and families. They coordinate support for families through the Early Help Assessment (EHA)

WHAT HAS WORKED WELL...?

**The support I have had from the EHA has been vital for the healing and growth of the whole family. The regular meeting gave me a safe place to feel heard and supported**

Early Help EHA's: On average the amount of EHA's open at any one time is 1240 (April 2021 to Mar 2022). Although this figure has started to reduce. It is early days but it is likely that this reduction is due to changes to the single front door, threshold application and the preventative help given by the Early Help Hub and other agencies.

One Young Person shared this feedback with their Early help Family Support Worker "You've made our family stronger and happier, we believe in a lot more people because you supported us to feel safer. I'm a lot happier and I can trust more people and I didn't think that would ever happen. The way we have been guided I feel like I can say what I feel and

I know I'll be listened to now. You helped us to see the rainbow and thank you for that, I will really miss you".

### **Panel and allocation of cases requiring support from early help services**

A weekly panel meeting considers all requests for support from Early Help via Early Help Assessment's. This panel comprises at least two Team Managers and a Social Worker from the Early Help Service.

## **The Early Help Family Support Team**

The Early Help Family Support Team work directly with children and families who have been referred. Support is holistic and outcome focussed in line with the EHA plan. In addition to the internal team two commissioned services Vennture and Homestart also provide direct work support.

### **What has worked well...?**

The Early Help Family Support team worked with 1052 children and young people between April '21 and March '22 helping families to achieve and improve their outcomes. The team provided holistic support for the whole family with the child/young person at the centre of everything we do. Working with other professionals to provide a team around the child and completing direct work and support with the children to ensure that their voice is heard.

## **Children Centre Services**

Children Centre Services support the targeted delivery of early childhood services in order 'to improve outcomes for young children and their families, with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged. This helps children to get the best start in life and support school readiness.

### **What has worked well...?**

96 parents have accessed Children Centre Services First Steps Programme. Parents report feeling more confidence in their parenting skills

## **Parenting Programmes:**

Parenting Programmes: The Early Help teams deliver 6 parenting programmes across the county on a termly basis:

- The Solihull Approach – 0-5 year old
- Standard triple P – 2 - 11 year old
- Teen Triple P – 11 - 18 year old
- Stepping Stones – 5-11 year old, for children with additional needs.
- Fearless – for parents to help manage their child's anxiety
- Transitions – for separating parents

## **Talk Community Hubs**

50 Talk Community Hubs are now open across the county and are beginning to extend their support and services to children and families. The Talk Community Directory provides information about some local support services and families can access this via the website.

# The Supporting Families Programme

The Supporting Families Programme is a programme in England administered by The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) **Supporting Families Programme**

The SFP supports targeted interventions for families experiencing multiple problems including domestic abuse, crime and antisocial behaviour, poor school attendance, unemployment, mental and physical health and children in need of help and protection. Supporting Families are central to and fully integrated with Herefordshire’s Early Help Offer. Successful family outcomes are the way the programme records positive change at a family level and these outcomes are measured through a Payment by Results (PbR) claim.

Supporting Families payment by results (PBRs) claim rose steadily throughout the year. In 2021-2022 Herefordshire’s SFP achieved the PBR target.



# Early Help In Herefordshire

Early Help is part of a continuum of responses from universal services through to acute, all of which are aimed at improving the lives of children.

The objective in Herefordshire is to develop a co-ordinated preventative and early help offer, embedded within a whole family approach.

- Improved digital Offer
- Improved self-help Offer
- Development of the local Talk community offer
- Families with more complex needs having easier access to early help assessments that builds protective factors and family resilience and reduces expenditure on costly reactive services.

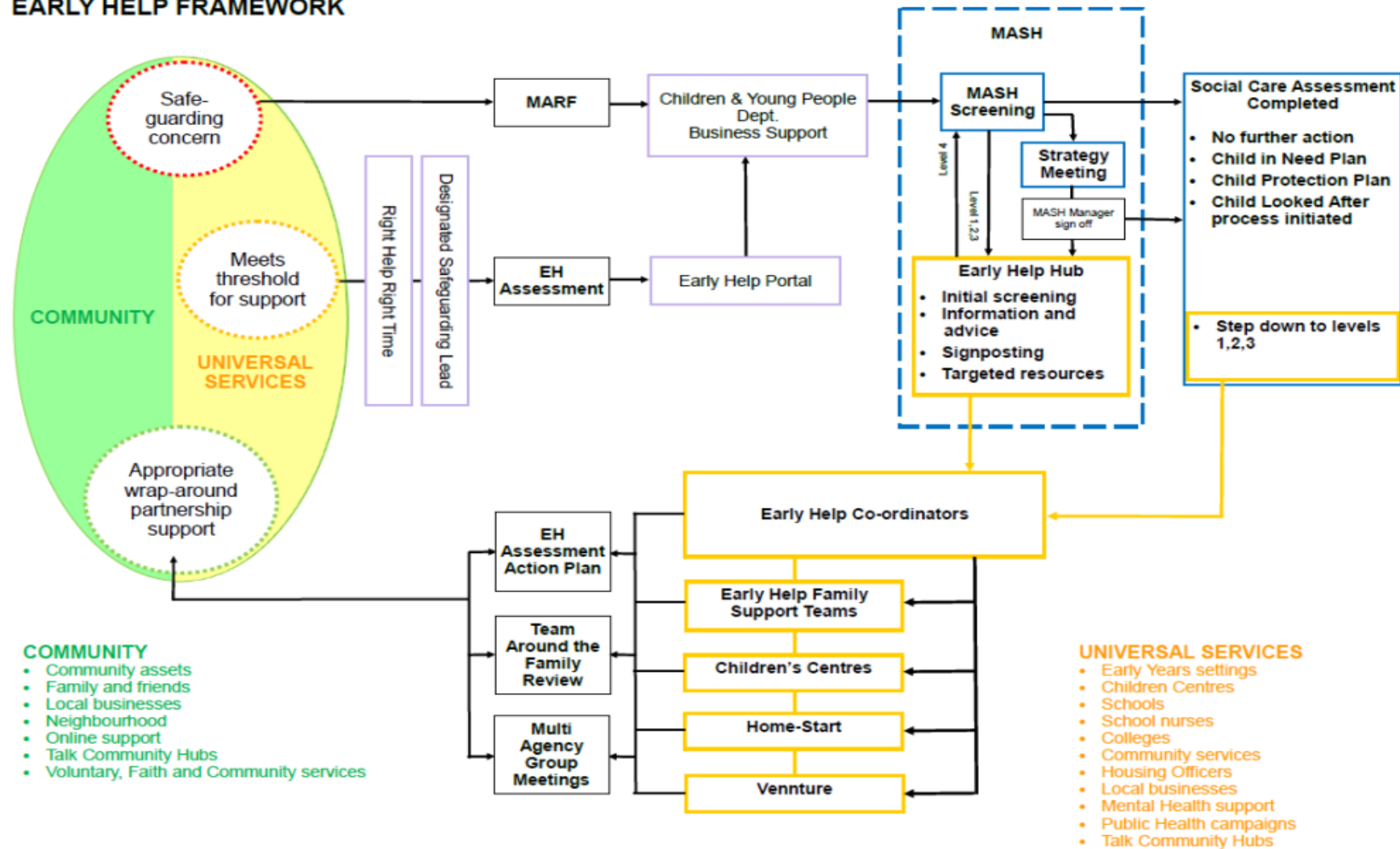
The Early Help Practice Framework supports the development of high-quality practice through application of across the partnership.

The delivery of an effective early help offer is not the responsibility of a single agency. It requires a whole family approach owned by all the stakeholders working with children, young people and their families in Herefordshire

In many instances universal and additional support is offered by partner agencies and community provision to prevent problems arising or to address emerging issues. (Level 1 and 2 on continuum of need).

Where more targeted or intensive support may be needed (level 3) practitioner can initiative and Early Help Assessment (EHA) or request further support via Herefordshire Single Front Door.

**EARLY HELP FRAMEWORK**

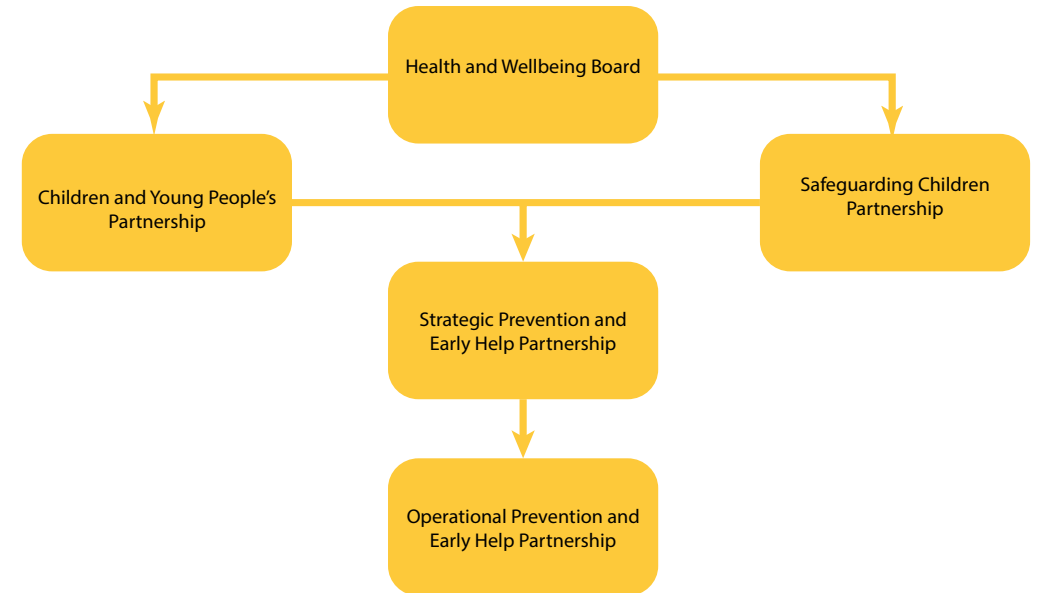


# What we would like to achieve

Whilst we have much to celebrate about our current Early Help offer in Herefordshire, we are mindful that Our County Plan (2020-2024) sets out the council's commitment to the children and young people of Herefordshire and our ambition for a whole system transformation that puts all children and young people at the heart of all that we do.

In order to achieve this we need to work together with our partners, communities, faith & voluntary sector, children, young people and families, staff and elected members, to get the right building blocks in place to move the culture and practice to prevention, self-help and early support.

Phase 2 of our improvement journey will help shape our work with our partners and stakeholders, into a more preventative approach that supports our ambition for a child centred county for the future.



## FURTHER INFORMATION-KEY DOCUMENTS THAT SUPPORT OUR STRATEGY

[Children and Young People's Plan – Herefordshire Council](#)

[Herefordshire's Children's Services Improvement Plan- Herefordshire Council](#)

[Growing up - Understanding Herefordshire](#)

[Herefordshire's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment - Understanding Herefordshire](#)

[Health and wellbeing strategy – Herefordshire Council](#)

[Munro review of child protection: a child-centred system - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

[Herefordshire Survey 2021](#)

[Children Act 2004 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

[Home | Early Intervention Foundation \(eif.org.uk\)](#)

[The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults \(bristol.ac.uk\)](#)

[Early intervention: the next steps - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Our strategy | Early Intervention Foundation \(eif.org.uk\)](#)

[The best start for life: a vision for the 1,001 critical days - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[National Centre for Family Hubs](#)

[Herefordshire Right Help Right Time Levels of Need guidance](#)

[Early Help Assessment - resources for practitioners and professionals – Herefordshire Council](#)

[Being a parent – Herefordshire Council](#)

[Supporting Families Programme guidance 2021 to 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Herefordshire Supporting Families Framework 2022](#)

[Children and families - Talk Community Directorate](#)



