

Bath and North East Somerset Council

Early Help Offer

Early Help – Bath and North East Somerset

Introduction

Most children and young people have a number of basic additional needs that can be supported through a range of universal services. These services include education, early years, health, housing, youth services, leisure facilities, local community and faith groups, as well as services provided by voluntary organisations. The role of parents as experts on their children is also recognised in Bath and North East Somerset and reinforced by a range of parenting support.

It is crucial, particularly through contact with universal services, that action is taken to identify problems early and put in place additional support rather than reacting to the symptoms of problems later when much more support may be required and better outcomes are harder to achieve.

Evidence shows that 'Early Help' both leads to better outcomes for children and young people and is cost-effective. Effective early help means providing support as soon as problems arise, at any stage in a child's life. Early Help relies upon all adult and children's services to identify those children and families that would benefit from early help; undertaking a comprehensive assessment of the need for early help and providing help to address need/s and improve outcomes.

This paper sets out the Early Help offer in Bath and North East Somerset.

A shared responsibility

Everyone working with children and young people has a responsibility to safeguard children and young people and promote their welfare. This depends upon effective joint-working between agencies. Practitioners will have different roles and expertise to be able to support children, young people and their families. Vulnerable children and those at greatest risk of poor outcomes will need co-ordinated help from a range of services.

Adult services, such as mental health or substance misuse services, should always include consideration of the needs of any children and young people in the family and any possible risks of harm to them when planning the adult's on-going treatment or discharging the adult from their care.

This document provides the following guidance for professionals and service users:

- clarifying the circumstances in which to carry out an Early Help Assessment (Common Assessment Framework).
- the criteria for access to Children's Social Care in Bath and North East Somerset and how that fits within the wider context of multi-agency services and a range of needs.

In applying the framework the following should be considered:

Children can move across the levels at different times in their lives, or during agencies' contact with them. They will move up through the levels only when lower levels of support are not adequate for them but will move back down as soon as their needs can be met by services at the lower level.

Intervention should be provided at the earliest opportunity appropriate to meet the needs of the child and consideration should always be given to undertaking an Early Help Assessment (Common Assessment Framework or CAF) to meet the child's needs and prevent the need for a specialist service.

<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/children-young-people-and-families/early-help-support-families>

If there are child protection concerns, professionals must follow the South West Child Protection Procedures and make an immediate referral to the Referral and Assessment Service for Children's Social Care. (www.swcpp.org.uk).

Local information can be found at <http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/children-young-people-and-families/child-protection>

Early Help and Integrated Working

In Bath and North East Somerset the Early Help Assessment (CAF) is one of a number of tools and processes which help practitioners to assess and address the needs of a child or young person. Education, health and other agencies have good quality tools that assess children's needs in their areas of expertise.

The aim of the Early Help Assessment (CAF) is to help identify, at the earliest opportunity, a child or young person's additional multiple needs which cannot be met by a single agency and to provide timely and co-ordinated multi-agency support to meet those needs.

Early Help and SEND Reform

SEND stands for Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disability. The reform is a transformation of the way support is provided for children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities up to the age of 25. Support will be focused on enabling children, young people and their families to achieve their long term aspirations. This reform comes from the Government's green paper 'Support and Aspiration', published in 2011. The proposals have been included in the Children and Families Bill 2013, which is currently making its way through parliament, with more detail set out in a draft code of practice for SEN published in October 2013. The new laws and code of practice will be finalised for implementation in Sept 2014.

The vision is to transform support for children and young people with SEN and disabilities based on:

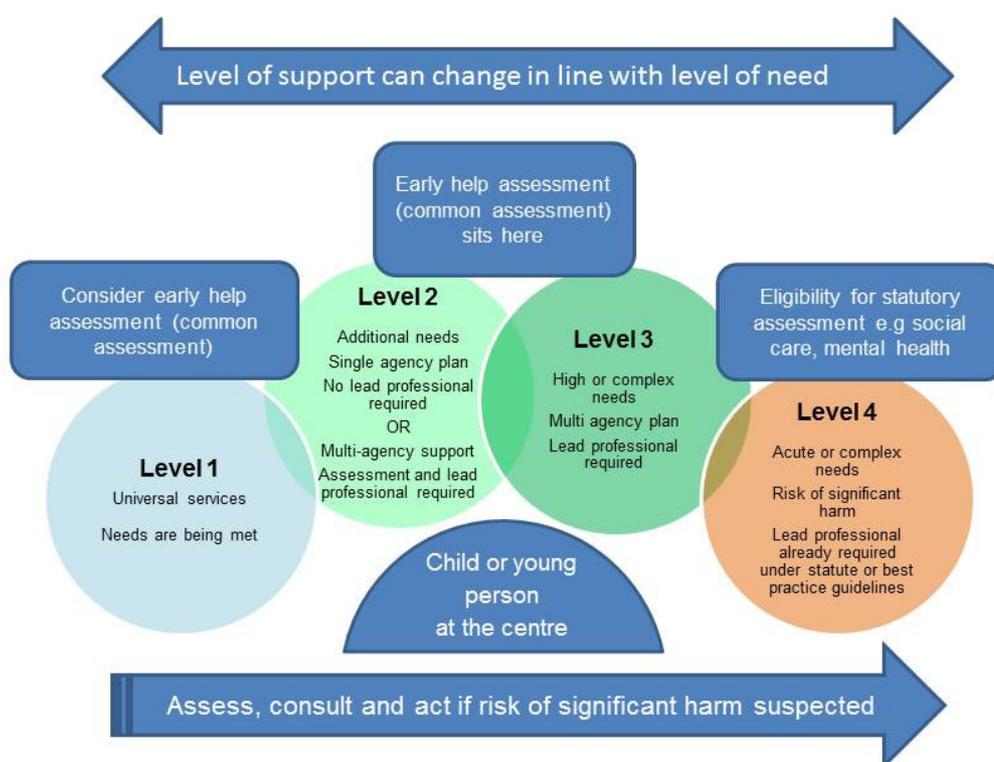
- Early identification of needs, and integrated early help.
- Integrated assessment and planning 0-25, focused on long term outcomes, bringing together education, health and care support, often starting with the Early Help assessment (CAF) as needs first emerge
- High quality provision organised with clear pathways and providing choice and control to families.
- Excellent outcomes achieved through the knowledge, skills and attitude of everyone working with children and young people.

SEN support will be provided by early years settings, schools, colleges and other providers based on early identification of needs. This replaces the work currently done under the headings of school action and school action plus. This work will be done with other services as needed, usually starting in an integrated way using the Early Help Assessment (CAF) and team around the child. This work will be centred on children, young people and their parent carers, their aspirations and desired outcomes.

Integrated education, health and care plans will replace statements of SEN. Assessments and the resulting plans will be centred on children, young people and their parent carers and focused on their aspirations and outcomes. Assessments will be carried out in a coordinated way, reducing duplication and repetition for families. This will bring together education, health, children’s and adult care services working on one assessment and plan 0-25.

Early Help Model

The diagram below describes the journey a practitioner may follow when putting in place early help and intervention support for a child or young person.



- * Level 1 – equates to Universal Services in Health
- * Level 2 – equates to Universal Plus in Health
- * Level 3 – equates to Universal Partnership Plus
- * Level 4 – where statutory intervention is needed

Level 1: Providing Early Help Services and Interventions - Universal settings provide services for all children and young people in their day-to-day work. In the majority of cases, a child or young person’s needs are addressed at this early stage

but it is always worth considering whether Early Help might be needed. The pre-CAF assessment may help with this. If the child's needs are not met, then move to Level 2.

Level 2: Identifying Additional Needs - Children and young people who have an additional need. These needs can be met by a single agency but again, an early help assessment (CAF) will ensure that any services provided keep the child at the centre and are needs-led. Any child or young person who may be subject to a school exclusion should be offered a common assessment to explore their needs in the widest sense.

If the child's needs become more complex or are multiple then move to level 3.

Sometimes another agency may have spotted additional needs before you and a CAF may have been completed. This can be checked centrally and will help you know who else might be involved.

Level 3: Assessing High or Complex Needs - Children or young people who have high or multiple needs, which require a co-ordinated response from two or more agencies. Where a child or young person has multiple needs the Early Help Assessment (CAF) should be offered to the family/young person. This will enable professionals to:

- contribute information from their areas of expertise that will improve support to the child
- coordinate work with the family and where appropriate share information
- jointly consider a child or young person's strengths and needs
- ensure there is clarity of who is taking the lead professional role

An Early Help Assessment (CAF) can only be undertaken with the informed and explicit written consent from the child/young person and/or their parents/carers.

Level 4: Acute or complex needs leading to eligibility for statutory assessment. Children and young people with acute or complex needs at level 4 are eligible to statutory assessment e.g from Children's Social Care or specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health services.

Forming the Team around the Child (TAC) - Where a multi-agency response is required the Team around the Child (TAC) is formed. This will bring together practitioners from across different services to co-ordinate and deliver an integrated package of solution-focused support and meet the needs identified during the Early Help Assessment (CAF) process. Solution-focused approaches will look at what families want to achieve as opposed to their problems. It is important that the child or young person and parents/carers are also included as part of the TAC.

Co-ordinating and delivering Integrated Early Help Services - In these instances, the person who undertakes the Early Help assessment (and identifies the need for multi-agency support) is responsible for convening the first TAC meeting from which a Lead Professional is agreed. Support for these roles is offered by the Integrated Working Team. The Lead Professional acts as the main point of contact for the child or young person and their family, and co-ordinates delivery of integrated services.

Level 4: Child Protection Procedures and Early Help - Where there is risk of harm and specialist intervention is required. Where there are signs that a child, young person or an unborn baby:

- is experiencing or may already have experienced abuse or chronic neglect or
- is likely to suffer significant harm in the future

a referral to Children's Social Care Referral and Assessment Team needs to be made following the South West Child Protection Procedures (www.swcpp.org.uk).

Tracking Distance Travelled and Reviewing Progress - The Early Help Assessment and delivery plan will be regularly reviewed by the TAC to monitor progress toward agreed outcomes. This will involve further multi-agency meetings and liaison between the members of the TAC.

To improve the tracking of outcomes, a Distance-Travelled Tool will be made available to be completed with families. This will show improved outcomes over time and identify any unmet or additional needs for the child or young person. Both the reviews and distance-travelled tool will inform whether a child or young person needs to 'step up' into more specialist services for children with complex or acute needs or 'step down' to receive single agency or universal services.

Information Sharing

Effective integrated working is underpinned by good practice in information sharing and clear communication.

Information sharing is a key part of the Government's goal to deliver better, more efficient public services that are co-ordinated around the needs of children, young people and families.

Information sharing is essential to enable early intervention and preventative work, for safeguarding and promoting welfare, and for wider public protection. Information sharing is a vital element in improving outcomes for all.

The Early Help Assessment (CAF) aims to enable and support good practice in information sharing about the needs of children and young people as part of preventative services. In so doing, all sharing (and storing) of information should be done lawfully and comply with the Data Protection Act 1998.

**Bath & North East Somerset
August 2013
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Appendix 1 - Preventative Services Pathway

