



---

**To: Education and Children's Service Scrutiny Board**

**Date: 21st July 2016**

**Subject: Early Help and Partnership Working**

---

## **1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To bring the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board up to date with progress on Early Help and Prevention.

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board are recommended to:
- 1) Consider the content of the briefing note and appendices
  - 2) Receive further progress reports as requested
  - 3) Identify any further recommendations for the appropriate Cabinet Member.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Early Help Strategy

Appendix 2: Early Help Action Plan

## **3 Background**

- 3.1 At the last education scrutiny committee – members received a paper outlining the significance of Early Help in supporting families and children at the earliest possible point/transitions in children's lives, and before problems escalate, needing acute, and costly services. The Early Help Strategy outlines key strategic objectives below which supports and strengthens the collaborative working arrangements and partnership of agencies and organisations across Coventry – to focus on improving outcomes for children and young people with a range of specific measures aimed at evidencing progress.

### Strategic objectives:

- ✓ To identify the needs of children, young people and families across a continuum of need – 0 – 19, to understand and respond quickly to that need
- ✓ Supports the refocusing of resources from crisis intervention to prevention
- ✓ Supports families to achieve their full potential and thereby mitigate the impact of issues such as child poverty and health inequalities
- ✓ Supports an action learning approach that ensures that learning and evidence informs future service design and delivery. This includes listening to what children and families have to say about what helps them to prevent problems from occurring or escalating
- ✓ To provide the context for multi-agency partnerships to work together to improve outcomes for children, young people and families

## **4 How will we know Early Help is working?**

- 4.1 The overall aim is to develop a cohesive Early Help offer embedded within a Whole Family approach, that builds protective factors and family resilience, (enables families to help themselves) and reduces expenditure of costly reactive services. Our ambition is that families, particularly those with multiple and complex needs will have access to co-ordinated Early Help in accordance with need as soon as difficulties are identified.

- 4.2 The offer is personalised, multi-agency, and evidenced based. Children and young people in those families will live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives and develop into responsible adult citizens, thereby breaking the intergenerational cycles of risk and vulnerability. Families will become more resilient and develop capabilities to prevent and resolve problems. The aim is to reduce demand for higher cost specialist services and achieve greater use of community based universal preventive services.
- 4.3 Social capital and resilience within local communities will be identified and enhanced.

## **5 Early Help measures**

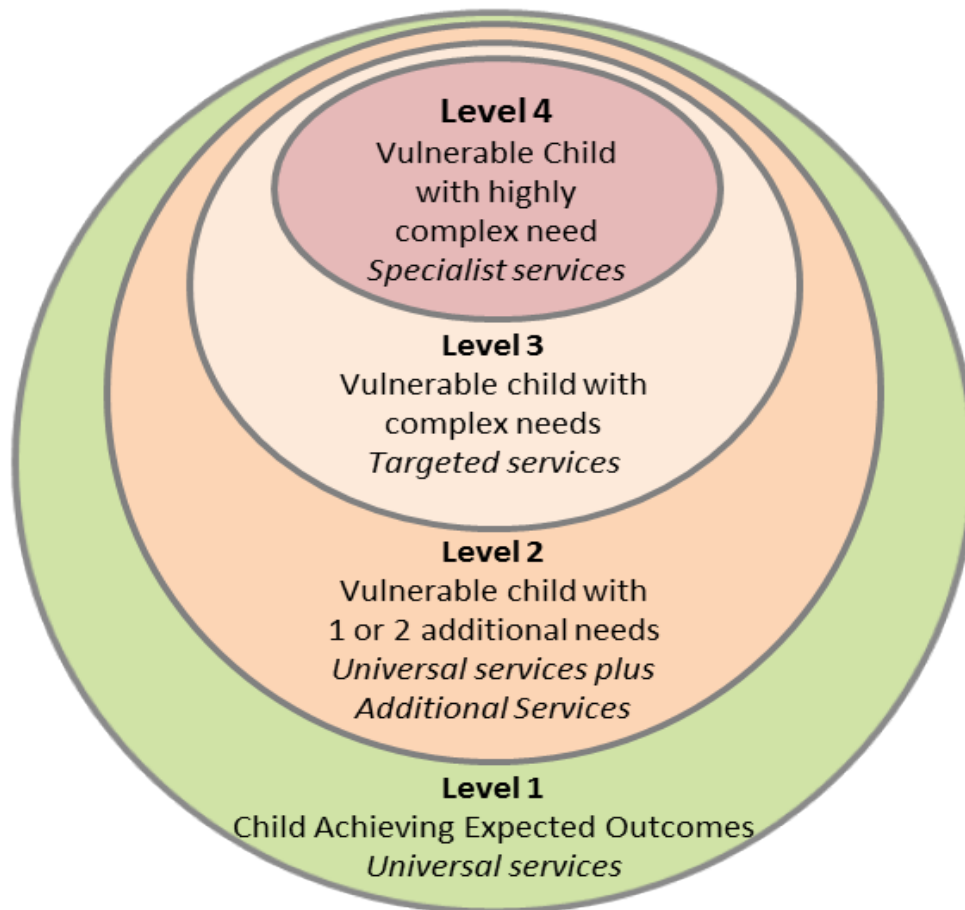
- 5.1 There are a wide range of important measures that are indicators of the effectiveness of early help. We have identified the following measures that we will particularly focus on to measure the effectiveness of our combined efforts:

- Maximise school readiness
- Maximise School attendance
- Minimise the numbers of referrals to social care
- Maximise the numbers of assessments completed to support the family when a need emerges
- Minimise the number of parents and children involved in crime and Anti-Social Behaviour
- Minimise the number of Looked After Children
- Minimise the number Child Protection Plans

- 5.2 The following 'output' measure which constitutes a proxy indicator of an effective co-ordinated early help offer, will also be adopted:
- Increase in the number of 'open' Common Assessment Frameworks completed per agency.

## **6 Infrastructure**

- 6.1 We already have many examples of early help good practice in Coventry. These include: Acting Early, Strengthening Families (formerly Troubled Families) and the Common Assessment Framework. Our delivery model includes a continuum of Early Help provided by a range of organisations including voluntary and community groups addressing different levels of need. We have integrated processes including Team around the Child and the Early Help Assessment and integrated teams including Children's Centre staff and Health Visitors to ensure earlier identification of emerging need and to provide a faster response.
- 6.2 The graphic below shows our graduated approach to service delivery with different types of services involved in different levels of vulnerability.



## 7 How effective is Early Help?

### 7.1 Early Learning and School Readiness

7.1.1 An Early Learning Programme ensures the delivery of the government participation targets for 2, 3 and 4 year olds are met. This includes optimising Coventry's private, voluntary and independent childcare sector. 63.1% of those eligible two years olds have taken up the offer. Participation rates 2/3/4/ years olds for Autumn 2015 increased by 11% on the previous year's data with the city now further exceeding national data published in January 15 by some 19% points. As of June 2016:

- The proportion of early year's settings judged good or better Ofsted judges 81% good, with 16% of settings judged as Requires Improvement and 3% of settings as Inadequate.
- The proportion of child-minders judged good or better by Ofsted in Coventry is 81%. With 18% of child-minders judged as Requires Improvement and 1% of child-minders judged as Inadequate.

### 7.2 Common Assessment Framework

7.2.1 The number of CAF's held is rising year on year, is currently just below the 2000 mark. CAF activity is focused on developing strengths within the family and support networks to allow families to benefit from universal services. In the year to date 68% of all CAF action plans have been completed successfully. In the year 2015/16, 171 staff across the education, health and third sector attended the Lead Professional training as part of the new initiative to support agencies outside social care, including the introduction of 'signs of safety' across the workforce. This resulted in an increase in CAF's at Level 2, demonstrating increasing confidence in the workforce. CAF Coordinators are attached to schools and offer case oversight and reflective practice sessions.

### 7.3 Strengthening Families

7.3.1 During Phase 1 'Strengthening Families' (formerly Troubled Families) successfully 'turned around' 905 complex families, indicating that thresholds and criteria for Intensive Family Support and CAF Level 3 was appropriately applied. Building on this success Coventry was invited by the Department for Communities and Local Government to become an 'early starter' for Phase 2. The first Phase 2 Payment by Results claim was made in January 2016, successfully claiming for 27 families. The adoption of the Strengthening Families 'whole family' methodology is now used across early help services, and all CAF's held by Children and Families First reflect this. Coventry YOS is often the lead agency on Strengthening Families cases and a representative from that team attends fortnightly case planning panels. These agree the intervention method and timescales, to ensure a holistic approach. This ensures that 'root cause' is addressed and the right services are put in place to support sustained change, thus improving children's attainment and aspirations for the future – 'breaking the cycle' of entrenched family behaviour.

## 8 How do we know if anyone is better off?

8.1 'Steps to Change' is a newly developed outcome impact tool that will be used by early help and prevention practitioners alongside the file audit process and case studies. The tool is as a measure of effectiveness of Early Help and Prevention and is helpful in engaging families so that they understand action required of them and the positive impact this has on their children. From April – July 2016 – Steps to Change will be tested out on 50 families to ensure its validity, before full implementation.

## 9 Future Plans and Challenges

9.1 The LSCB are leading on a piece of work to refresh local understanding of social care thresholds. It is evident from the number of contacts made to Social Care that some practitioners are not sufficiently skilled or confident to engage and support children who are just below the level of need which requires social care intervention and are not always managing 'risk'. The outcome is a high numbers of contacts and referrals which do not meet threshold, contributing to high caseloads in the Referral and Assessment Service (RAS). Where there are immediate concerns about a child's safety they are reviewed straight away within the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and actioned without delay. However children who meet the criteria for assessments sometimes experience delays because the service is dealing with cases that do not meet threshold.

9.2 The Children and Families First service (CFF) employs five dedicated social work posts to ensure sufficient practical advice and consultation is available in the Early Help and Prevention arena. These social workers complement the CAF Co-ordinators, supporting front line practitioners in improving the quality of assessments so that the improved outcomes for children, young people and families are evident and measurable. The interface between Early Help and specialist services is constantly being developed ('step up' and 'step down') to ensure that children's needs are identified and met by the right service, at the right time.

## 10 Connecting Communities - Review and Redesign

10.1 Evidence tells us that children and family services are not working together as they could and all too often people still don't know where to go to get help. Family hubs are proposed as a 'game changer' for public services. Taking the best from current practice of working with the whole family and working across all ages, including all children and young people, as well as parents. Joined up and integrated working between different sectors, family hubs would become the bedrock everywhere, getting the right help to those who need it, when they need it. Working alongside social workers who would offer additional support in terms of advice and consultation.

10.2 Based on an analysis of need across the City – it is proposed that nine family hubs will be developed with the aim of integrating children’s services into teams that delivers an Early Help offer in community settings, identifying when a problem first emerges and ensuring effective interventions. This new model of Early Help – from early intervention to social care will create a new local infrastructure, using money and resources more efficiently, doing more and doing it better, utilising the strengths of families in their communities to improve lives now and for the future.

## **11 Governance**

11.1 A decision to merge the Early Help Board and Strengthening Families Board will improve the focus on key tasks around workforce development, using the feedback from parents about what interventions and type of support helped to turn their lives around. The Early Help action plan is shared and owned by key partners across all sectors that provide Early Help and Prevention services, reporting to the Children’s Services Improvement Board and the Children and Young People’s Board. (Appendix 2 – Early Help Action Plan)

### **Authors**

Fran Doyle, Head of Early Help and Prevention  
John Gregg, Director of Children’s Services

Contact details: [john.gregg@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:john.gregg@coventry.gov.uk)  
Tel: (024) 7683 3402

[Fran.doyle@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:Fran.doyle@coventry.gov.uk)  
Tel: (024) 7683 1449

# Appendix 1

## Coventry Early Help Strategy

### Our shared commitment

This Early Help strategy sets out our shared commitment to deliver effective early help to children, young people and their families.

### Our vision for children and young people

Coventry's vision is of a city that promotes economic growth and jobs and protects the most vulnerable. Children and young people are at the heart of this. They are important to our city now and into the future. Our vision for children and young people is for:

**Coventry children and young people to have supportive families, live safe from harm, fulfill their potential, are healthy, and have positive and fulfilling lives.**

Children and young people need to to enjoy their childhood and adolescent years and grow up to be responsible citizens, contributing to our city.

### What Early Help is

Early Help is an approach to maximise the chances of this vision becoming real for every Coventry child and young person aged 0-19 years old and up to 25 years old for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Early Help is a way of working that supports children in the early years of their lives, or early on in the emergence of a problem at any stage in their lives. Our definition of Early Help is one that can practically be applied by any professional in any context. Our definition of early help is to:

- **Reach children, young people and families when the need first emerges;**  
**and**
- **Intervene when you can have the most impact.**

### Why Early Help is important

Early Help is a high priority nationally and in Coventry for two key reasons.

Firstly, effective early help has a positive impact on the lives of children and young people. This has been evidenced through several reviews<sup>1</sup> - led by Graham Allen MP, Rt

---

<sup>1</sup> Reviews include: Early Intervention: The Next Steps. An Independent Report to her Majesty's Government (2011), Graham Allen MP; The Foundation Years: Preventing Poor Children from Becoming Poor Adults (2010), Frank Field; The Early Years: Foundations for Life, Health and Learning (2011), Dame Claire Tickell, The Monro Review of Child Protection (2011), Professor Eileen Monro; and The Marmot Review (2010)

Hon Frank Field, Dame Claire Tickell, Professor Eileen Munro, Sir Michael Marmot in addition to Working Together (2013) and work by the Centre for excellence in outcomes (C4E0).

Sir Michael Marmot underlined the significance of early help in the following way, *“Giving every child the best start in life is crucial for securing health and reducing health inequalities across the life course. The foundations for virtually every aspect of human development – physical, intellectual and emotional – are laid in early childhood. What happens during these early years, starting in the womb, has life-long effects on many aspects of health and well-being”.*

Secondly, effective Early Help has a positive impact on public finances in a context of significant financial pressures. Effective early help reduces the demand for higher cost services. Conversely late help has a high human cost and a high financial cost. Indeed the Early Intervention Foundation report estimated a £17bn national cost of late intervention. Our aim is for a redirection of our finite resources from high cost, high intervention services to prevention and early intervention support and services. In this context, there is a strong motivation to get Early Help right in Coventry.

### **Our Coventry context**

Coventry is a city of around 329,800 residents with 83,800 of whom are aged 0-19 years old (2012). The population is younger than the average for England, the average age of a Coventry resident being 34 compared to 40 overall in England. The city is ethnically diverse, with 33% of Coventry’s inhabitants coming from ethnic minority communities compared to 20% for England as a whole. Deprivation is higher than the England average; 25.9% (16,400) children live in poverty.

The majority of Coventry children and young people are safe at home and in the community, do well at school and are healthy. However, we have high numbers of children who are known to social care and have a Child in Need Plan, Child Protection Plans or are Looked After and high numbers of Troubled Families compared to our statistical neighbours. The ‘toxic trio’ of domestic violence, mental health issues and drug and alcohol abuse are significant issues for some Coventry parents, which impacts on their children. Some families have deeply entrenched multi-generational problems.

The high levels of demand for specialist services lead to significant financial costs against a backdrop of significant public sector financial pressures. This combination of

high service demand and financial challenges underline the importance of delivering effective Early Help. Our aim is for a redirection of resources from high cost, high intervention services to prevention and early intervention support and services. This benefits families and is a better use of finite resources.

## **Strategic Objectives**

- To identify the needs of children, young people and their families across a continuum of need
- To understand and respond quickly to the needs of children, young people and families across the continuum of need
- To support the refocusing of resources from crisis intervention to prevention
- To support families to achieve their full potential and thereby mitigate the impact of issues such as child poverty and health inequalities
- To support an action learning approach that ensures the learning and evidence informs future service design and delivery. This includes listening to what children and families have to say about what best helps to prevent problems occurring or escalating
- To provide the context for multi-agency partnerships to work together to improve outcomes for children, young people and families for generations to come

## **The principles of how we will work together**

The way that we work together is important. The following guiding principles set out the way we strive to work with families, together as practitioners:

- The experience, wellbeing and the voice of children and young people is central to everything we do so children are safe.
- Effective Early help is the responsibility of everyone in Coventry. This includes organisations working directly with children, young people and families such as schools, Children's Services Coventry City Council, Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group, Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust and community and voluntary organisations and groups
- Parents have the primary responsibility for the care and development of their children and for their growing up in a loving environment where there are strong attachments. The family is the primary resource. We believe that most parents want the best for



their children. We will build trusting relationships with parents in order to support them and to build on the strengths and skills they have to bring up their children.

- We will work with the whole family and recognise the uniqueness and diversity of each family and family member.
- We will work with families to enable the development of positive extended family, personal and community networks so that families access positive informal support.
- We will work with families to identify needs and root causes rather than with presenting issues at the earliest opportunity.
- We will deliver and target the right evidence-based support, at the right time and will flexibly endeavour to ensure the best outcomes for children, young people and their families. We will stick with families rather than just referring on.
- We will regularly evaluate the impact of our work with individual families and learn from this through measuring success outcomes of interventions delivered and seeking feedback from children and families on their perceptions of the effectiveness of work with them.
- We will involve families in shaping, designing and delivering support and services.
- We will use shared resources and assets more effectively and creatively together. This includes buildings, finances and most significantly people – the strengths of families and professionals.

### **How will we know Early Help is working?**

The overall aim is to develop a cohesive Early Help offer embedded within the whole family approach that builds protective factors and family resilience, enabling families to help themselves, reducing expenditure on costly reactive services. Our ambition is that families, particularly those with multiple and complex needs will have access to coordinated Early Help in accordance with need as soon as difficulties are identified.

The offer is personalised, multi agency and evidence based. Children and young people in those families will live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives and develop into responsible adult citizens, thereby breaking the intergenerational cycles of risk and vulnerability. Families will become more resilient and develop capabilities to prevent and resolve problems. Social capital and resilience within communities will be identified and enhanced.

### **Early Help Measures**

There are a wide range of important measures that are indicators of the effectiveness of Early Help. We have identified the following measures that we will particularly focus on to measure the effectiveness of our combined efforts:

Effective Early Help will deliver against the following outcomes

- Maximise school readiness
- Maximise School attendance
- Minimise the numbers of referrals to social care
- Maximise the numbers of assessments completed to support the family when a need emerges
- Minimise the number of parents and children involved in crime and Anti-Social Behaviour
- Minimise the number of Looked After Children
- Minimise the number Child Protection Plans

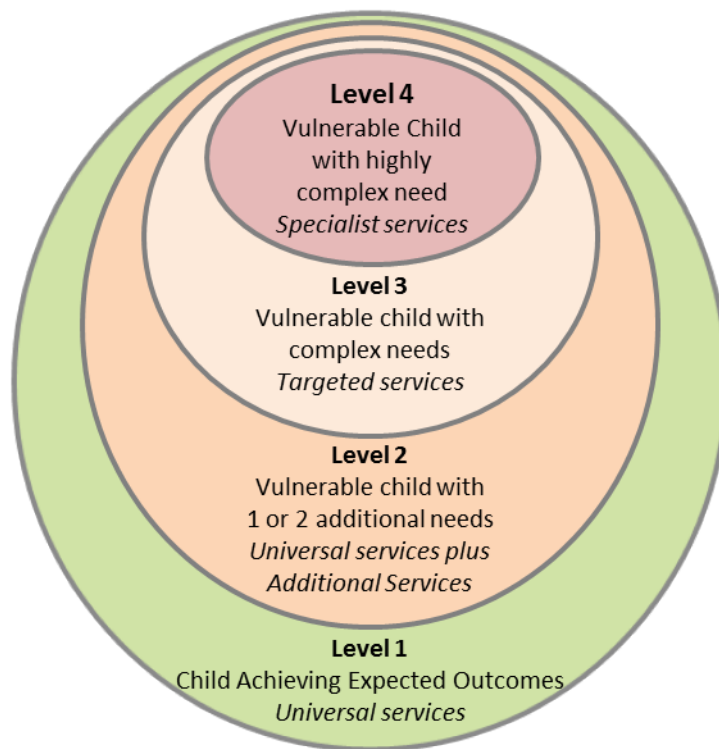
The following output measure which constitutes a proxy indicator of an effective co-ordinated Early Help offer will also be adopted:

- Increase in the number of open CAF assessments (Common Assessment Framework) completed per agency.

### **Infrastructure**

We already have many examples of early help good practice in Coventry. These include: Acting Early, Strengthening Families (formerly Troubled Families) programme and the Common Assessment Framework (see Appendix). Our delivery model includes a continuum of Early Help provided by a range of organisations including voluntary and community groups addressing different levels of need. We have integrated processes including Team Around the Family and the Early Help Assessment and integrated teams including Children's Centre staff and Health Visitors to ensure earlier identification of emerging need and to provide a faster response.

The graphic below shows our graduated approach to service delivery with different types of services involved in different levels of vulnerability.



**Our delivery will include:**

- Embed and roll out the **Acting Early** (0-5 year olds) initiative so that universal/universal plus professionals complete early targeted work with children and families, professionals hold risk and pull down specialist support rather than tending to refer on.
- Implement **Strengthening Families** phase 2 so that we meet the government targets of impacting 3,120 families over the next five years.
- **Integrate early years' services** including Children's Centres, Health visitors and the Family Nurse Partnership, building on the evidence and best practice identified in the Early Intervention Foundation publication 'Getting it Right for Families' (2014).
- Develop "**hubs**" that integrate children's services in community settings, for ease of access for children, young people and families.
- Deliver the **Early Learning programme** so that government participation targets for 2, 3 and 4 year olds are met. This includes developing and optimising the Coventry Private Voluntary and Independent childcare sector.

- Focus on the **‘toxic trio’ of domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse**. This includes the development of the Family Drug and Alcohol Court work (targeting early intervention in repeat pregnancies and post care support after birth) and commissioning approaches.
- Building on the learning from ‘Acting Early’ develop our integrated **school-age early help** offer by developing strong partnership relationships between schools and early help services, parents and young people
- Strengthen our **parenting offer** so this builds on good practice and focus on **group as well as individual work**, bringing together parents and families to work effectively together.
- Develop a **new model for mental health and emotional wellbeing support**. Build capacity and expertise of universal professionals to spot signs and symptoms early, and put in place plans of early support after consultation from mental health professionals. Clear support and treatment pathways for young people who need stepping up to more specialist treatment.
- Deliver phase 2 of the **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities** reforms – “Lifting the Cloud of limitation” with a focus on person-centred approaches and an effective journey to adulthood.
- Deliver the **Ignite Programme** in partnership with Coventry Law Centre and Grapevine and funded by the Early Action Neighbourhood Fund. This programme has a specific focus on working with families at the earliest point to build capacity to manage day to day problems as well as developing personal and community networks. It is intended to change the relationship between families and services and to accelerate Coventry's investment in Early Help.
- Deliver effective **health promotion**, to empower families to have an influence over their own health through positive lifestyle choices.
- Develop our **collective workforce** in strengths-based working, working with parents as well as children, developing personal and community networks – to provide support and challenge and to work to the guiding principles.

- Implement consistent processes for **assessment** across all organisations.
- Use our children's services **buildings** more effectively by considering different ways of operating them and maintaining an appropriate balance between home-based services and building based services.

## **Governance**

The multi-agency Children's Early Help Board will oversee the progress of the strategy, with accountability to the Children's Joint Partnership Board, and the Local Children's Safeguarding Board.

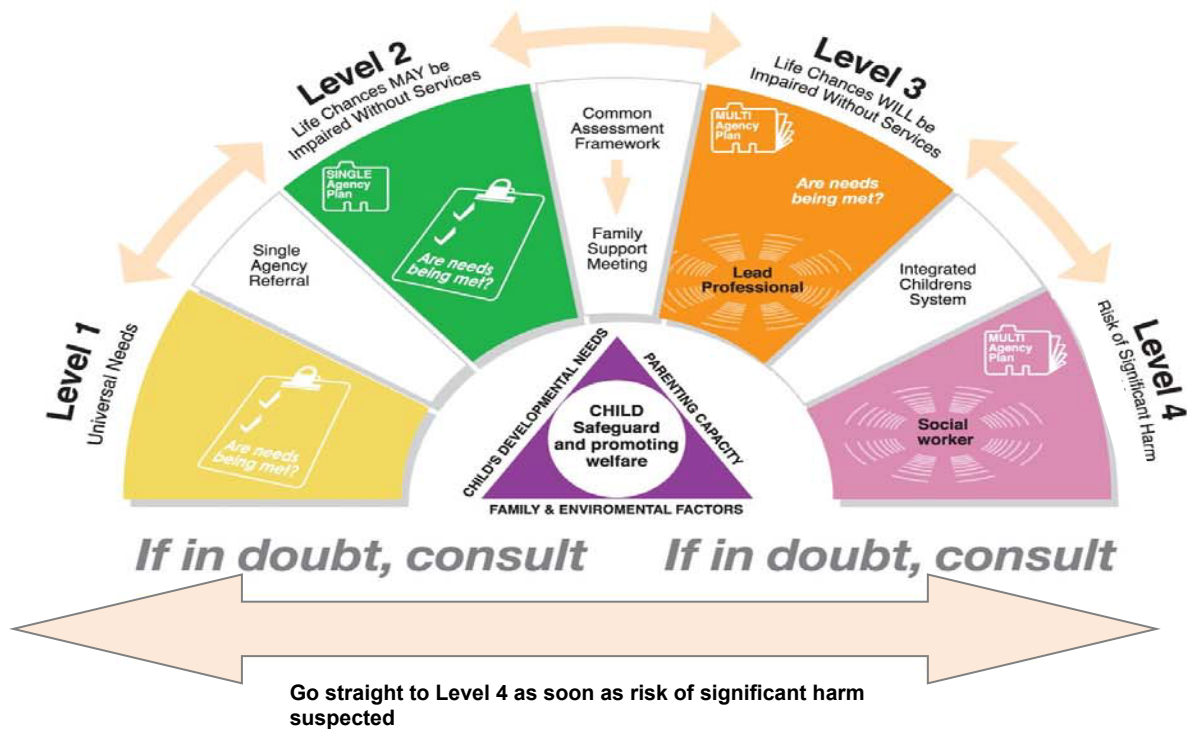
## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A - Building on good practice**

Much Early Help is already in place in Coventry. This includes: the Common Assessment Framework, Strengthening Families, Children's Centres delivering a range of programmes and support services, and 11 Children's Centres being designated as Acting Early Centres, which offer support from Health Visitors, GPs and midwives.

We will continue to improve support and services for children, young people and families. This strategy builds on and develops good practice.

**The Common Assessment Framework (CAF).** CAF is a key part of the strategy to shift the focus from dealing with the consequences of difficulties in children's lives to preventing things from going wrong in the first place. It is a nationally standardised approach to conducting an assessment of the needs of a child or young person and deciding how those needs should be met. The Common Assessment is Coventry's early help assessment and assists professionals in understanding the causes of difficulties and to identify and deliver the best and most appropriate support to the family. CAF is embedded in our safeguarding procedures.



**Strengthening Families Programme (formerly Troubled Families).** Phase 1 of the programme has supported 634 Coventry families to turn their lives around. These families need to meet criteria of anti-social behaviour/crime, education and worklessness. Coventry is an early adopter of the Phase 2 national programme and are focusing on identifying a further 3,130 families who can benefit from the expanded programme over the next five years. Phase 2 of The Strengthening Families programme broadens the scope of the programme and in Coventry we have an integrated model which spans early help and more targeted services (e.g. intensive family support). A wider range of families will be worked with under phase 2, these include: parents and children involved in crime and anti-social behaviour, children who have not been attending school regularly, children who need help, adults out of work or a risk of financial exclusion and young people at risk of workless, domestic violence and abuse, health problems. The Payment by Results model facilitates the family support model.

**Acting Early.** The Acting Early model is based on integrated teams working together to deliver a robust universal 'core offer' and through that delivery, identifying those children and families requiring additional targeted early support. It is a key early intervention programme that aims to work in partnership with parents to prevent infant mortality, improve parental health and maximise early child development, nutrition and readiness for school.

We aim to;

- give disadvantaged and vulnerable children a better start in life;

- reduce the costs of dealing with later health and social problems; and
- provide effective, sustainable and scalable, preventable approaches in pregnancy and in very early life.

There are now 6 Acting Early sites across Coventry: Hillfields, Tile Hill, Foleshill, Longford, Henley and; Binley and Willenhall – with a further 5 to follow.

**Multi Systemic Therapy (MST).** MST is an evidence based programme working with 20 children and young people at any one time to prevent them from entering care. It offers intensive family support and therapeutic intervention. It is led by a team of highly qualified Social Care, provides 24 hour support to the families of children and young people aged 11 to 17 who are identified by the Intensive Case and Support Panel (ICaSP) as being on the edge of care or custody.

There is other good practice in Coventry including: the contribution of community and voluntary services (e.g. Volunteers in Child Protection, Citizens Advice Bureau, the Law Centre). Further, we have put in place the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), the Child Sexual Exploitation team, the Family Nurse Partnership and the Children and Families First case-holding approach. The Coventry Early Help Directory of Services is aligned to this strategy.

## **Appendix B: Examples of changes to Early Help**

### **1 – School readiness**

School readiness is a key success measure for Early Help. Currently there is some partnership working between children’s centres and schools to enable children to be school ready. This partnership working will increase through schools playing a more active role with 2, 3 and 4 year olds. This will enable better family working where a child may be in school and another in nursery. It will enable schools to better influence school readiness prior to arrival at school.

### **2 - School-age early help offer**

Schools have on-going relationships with children and parents. Children and Family First and Social Care may also be involved with the family. The connection between these services and other services isn’t as strong as it could be, meaning that information isn’t capitalised on. Work to develop our integrated school-age early will bring schools, family support services and social workers closer together. Schools will be a focal point for

early help delivery and this will enable better collaborative working and information sharing leading to better outcomes for the child and family. It should also lead to appropriate referrals to the Referral and Assessment Service.