
To: Health and Wellbeing Board

Date: 5th February 2025

Title: Early Help and Prevention

1 Purpose of the Note

To reiterate the expectations of partners regarding the delivery of Early Help and Prevention, how this is mobilised in Coventry and its effectiveness.

To describe the expectations being outlined in the new Children and Wellbeing Bill

To update the Health and Wellbeing Board on the progress to date of the Family Hub and Start for Life Offer

To update the Board on the delivery of the Supporting Families Programme and the transition into Family Help across the partnership.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That all services, agencies and teams familiarise themselves with the Early Help strategy and its commitment to children and families and identify how their service can help meet the commitments to help families achieve positive outcomes.**
- 2.2 That services, agencies and teams across the partnerships and sectors familiarise themselves with the proposed social care reforms and consider their response to key policy documentation including Stable Homes built on love, and Keeping children safe, helping families thrive, and start to consider the potential implications for transformation that may be required to undertake as part of the integrated case system.**
- 2.3 That all interested parties join the Family hub network, download the Coventry families portal app and share with their teams to utilise in practice to navigate families to the right help in Coventry and access beneficial services.**
- 2.4 That services understand their responsibilities to contribute to supporting families in need of targeted early help as outlined in the Coventry workforce table and seek any support they need to notice and identify children, initiate early help assessments, participate in team around the family arrangements and act as lead practitioners when appropriate, acting in the best interests of children, young people and their families.**

3 Information/Background

3.1 Current multiagency Early Help and Prevention and expectations of partners

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#) describes the expectations for multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children. The current expectations are for partners working together within early help through a collaborative, multi-agency approach to support children and families, including:

1. **Shared Responsibility:** All partners, including local authorities, health services, education providers, and voluntary organizations, are expected to work together to identify and support children and families in need of early help.
2. **Information Sharing:** Effective information sharing between agencies is crucial to ensure that children and families receive timely and appropriate support.
3. **Continuous Improvement:** Agencies are encouraged to regularly review and improve their early help practices ensuring they are meeting the needs of children and families effectively.

These expectations aim to create a cohesive and effective support system for early intervention, helping to prevent issues from escalating and ensuring the well-being of children and families.

Early Help is support for children of all ages that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. It is not an individual service, but a system of support delivered by local authorities and their partners working together and taking collective responsibility to provide the right provision in their area.

Early Help system of support



Strong multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working is vital in identifying and responding to the needs of children and families. The expectations of Working Together to Safeguard Children, including the delivery of Early Help, apply to all agencies and practitioners working in services and settings connected to children including police, local authorities, health services, probation services, youth offending services, education providers and childcare settings, and voluntary and third sector organisations.

In Coventry, the Early Help and Prevention system of support is arranged and governed by the Early Help Strategic Partnership (a subgroup of the Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership), who are responsible for the development, activation and evaluation of the Early Help Strategy. This is mobilised across the partnership and community of practice through 10 Early Help Outcome Groups, which are multiagency and multidisciplinary, as well as the Family Hub Network and other local community based Early Help and prevention forums. There are several other strategies and plans across the sector which include an early intervention and prevention focus including the Domestic Abuse Strategy, Housing and Homelessness and the Vanguard Programme.

In "Working Together to Safeguard Children" guidance the expectations are described for strategic leaders, senior and middle managers and those delivering direct practice. For those involved in direct practice the expectations are to:

- **Collaborate:** practitioners working with the same child and family share information to get a complete picture of what life is like for the child. Collectively, they ensure the child's voice is at the centre and the right support is provided
- **Learn:** practitioners learn together by drawing on the best available evidence from their individual fields and sharing their diverse perspectives during regular shared reflection on a child's development, experiences, and outcomes
- **Resource:** practitioners build strong relationships across agencies and disciplines to ensure they support and protect the children with whom they work
- **Include:** practitioners recognise the differences between, and are confident to respond to, circumstances where children experience adversity due to economic and social circumstances and acute family stress, and situations where children face harm due to parental abuse and neglect
- **Mutual challenge:** practitioners challenge themselves and each other, question each other's assumptions, and seek to resolve differences of opinion in a restorative and respectful way

In Coventry this is activated in the Early Help process through the undertaking of an Early Help Assessment, leading to a family plan and supported by a team around the family approach. The role that practitioners across the system are expected to undertake are detailed in the Coventry's CSCP Work Force Table (Appendix 2) and include:

- **Notice and identify** children, young people and families who need help and what level of help those needs are (according to Right Help Right Time Guidance),
- **Initiate** the Early Help Assessment to understand and describe the needs of the whole family.
- **Respond** to the needs of children by contributing to the Early Help Plan and the team around the family
- **Act** as the lead practitioner, co-ordinating the plan and being the key worker with the family

3.2 The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill

[The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill](#) was introduced in Parliament on 17 December 2024.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill has had two readings so far. The bill is currently being scrutinized by the Public Bill Committee, which started its sessions on 21 January 2025, and is expected to report by 11 February 2025.

Part 1 of the bill contains reforms to children's social care. Part 2 makes provision relating to education in England. Most of the social care reforms were foreshadowed in the policy paper, '[Keeping children safe, helping families thrive](#)', which was published in November 2024.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill aims to enhance child protection and improve educational standards. These measures are designed to protect vulnerable children and support families, making child-centred government a reality, with the following key features:

1. **Child Safety:** Strengthens multi-agency safeguarding arrangements to quickly identify and address significant harm, especially for children not enrolled in school or missing education.
2. **Education Tracking:** Introduces a unique identifying number for every child to ensure they are receiving the right education.
3. **Home Education Safeguards:** Implements unprecedented safeguards for home-educated children and increases council powers to monitor their education.
4. **Financial Relief for Parents:** Caps the number of branded items required for school uniforms, potentially saving families over £50 per child. Also, provides a legal entitlement to a breakfast club for every primary school child, saving parents up to £450 per year.
5. **School Admissions:** Extends local authorities' power to direct academies to admit children, ensuring all children have access to education.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill outlines several key expectations for safeguarding partners, which include local authorities, NHS integrated care boards, and the police. These measures aim to create a more integrated and responsive system to protect children from harm.

1. **Mandatory Participation:** Education and childcare providers are now mandatory participants in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
2. **Collaboration:** Safeguarding partners must work closely with schools and childcare providers to ensure comprehensive protection for children.
3. **Information Sharing:** There is an emphasis on effective information sharing between all safeguarding partners to quickly identify and address risks to children.
4. **Accountability:** Each partner is accountable for their role in safeguarding, ensuring that no child falls through the cracks.

Child protection and safeguarding planned amendments and changes to legislation

Safeguarding partners

The bill seeks to amend the Children Act 2004 to make it a requirement for the three safeguarding partners (the local authority, NHS integrated care board and police) in each local area to include education and childcare “relevant agencies” as mandatory participants in their multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Currently, safeguarding partners only need to make arrangements to work with a “relevant agency” if they consider it appropriate to do so.

Establishment of Family Help (replacing Early Help and CIN)

The aim is to help families to receive high quality support at the earliest opportunity, so that they can overcome challenges, stay together and thrive by creating a seamless, non-stigmatising offer of support underpinned by whole-family approach and working in a strengths-based way. This will be underpinned by the following key components:

- Merging the strengths of targeted Early Help and section 17 (Child in Need) work, with flexibility on who leads direct work with families to support relationship building
- Utilising multi-disciplinary teams, delivering support out of community-based settings
- Establishing the Family Help Lead Practitioner role – which can include Social Workers
- Creating new Family Help Assessments and Plans, to identify needs and capture the services to be provided for children and families
- Reform the approach to the front door, to support decision making and reduce stigma

This will form part of an end-to-end system of support – building out of Family Hubs (where they exist) through to the edge of care – recognising that families arrive at different parts of the system and their needs may increase or decrease over time.

Multi-agency child protection teams

The bill would insert new sections into the Children Act 2004 to require safeguarding partners to establish and run at least one multi-agency child protection team in their area. The main purpose of these new teams is to support the local authority in delivering its child protection duties under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

ICBs will be required to nominate a health professional with experience in relation to children’s health, while the police will be required to nominate an officer to be part of each multi-agency child protection team. The local authority is required to nominate someone with experience in education in relation to children and a social worker with experience in relation to children and may appoint other appropriate individuals after consultation with safeguarding partners.

Information sharing

The bill would also amend the Children Act 2004 to impose a duty on specified persons and bodies to disclose information that may be relevant to safeguarding or promoting the

welfare of a child, to other relevant persons in certain circumstances. The duty applies where the person considers that the disclosure may facilitate the exercise by the recipient of any of its functions that relate to safeguarding or promoting the welfare of children, unless disclosure would be detrimental to the child.

The duty to share information will apply to persons listed in section 11(1) of the Children Act 2004, including local authorities, ICBs, NHS trusts/foundation trusts, police forces, probation services and youth offending teams, along with education and childcare “relevant agencies”.

Consistent child identifier

The bill also makes provision, under the Children Act 2004, for a consistent child identifier (also known as a single unique identifier or SUI). Designated persons must include the consistent identifier when processing information about a child for safeguarding and promotion of welfare purposes.

The Bill also sets out reforms related to the Support for children in care or kinship care, and those leaving care, Accommodation of children, the Regulating provider groups, and a number of reforms aimed at protecting children who are being educated at home. Most of these involve amendments to the Education Act 1996.

3.3 Update on the Family Hub and Start for Life Programme - universal partnership Early Help Offer

Coventry has 8 Family Hub buildings, and also delivers a comprehensive offer of support in the local communities across Coventry and through a new digital platform. Coventry is recognised as a trailblazer in the National Family Hub and Start for Life programme, funded by the Department of Education and Department of Health and Social Care (2022-2025). Coventry continues to progress with the delivery of the Family Hub and Start for Life Programme and the headline reports and data across the partnership projects evidenced that all workstreams will achieve, or exceed, targets for their overall outcomes by the end of the funded programme in March 2025. We have received notification of an additional year funding for 25/26 and a report of progress and request to accept the grant will be taken to Cabinet and Council in March 25.

The Family Hub and Start for Life Programme Board currently oversees the work of each funded workstream, with workstream leads representing the partnership agencies and teams delivering on this programme. The Public Health Consultant responsible for inequalities and Children currently attends and supports this board.

Regular updates and reports are submitted to the Family Hub and Start for Life unit (Department of Education and Department of Health and Social Care) and quarterly data returns are also submitted on the reach of this programme children, young people and adults (parent/carers).

An outcome framework and logic model are in place that set out the ambitions for this programme for Coventry and is the basis of the internal evaluation of its impact.

Coventry continues to receive regional and national interest, including an invitation to attend the Houses of Parliament and a recent visit by the Director General from DfE. Coventry's programme is part of an independent national evaluation, undertaken by Ecroys, on behalf of the national team.

An Initial review of data shows that over 50 families took part in the research and shared their views on a range of themes regarding their experience of accessing the offer. Parents quote ***"It's always been a place of safety no matter for us no matter what"***
"It was nice to finally feel listened to and for them to be a second voice for me"

Further research attached to the National Evaluation of Family Hubs regarding Family Experience and Workforce is currently live, and findings will inform the next phase of delivery. National case studies to highlight promising practice have also been published about Coventry's Infant Feeding Offer.

New Elements of the Coventry Offer

Coventry Family Hubs continue to develop further its offer to families and the funding has enabled a wide range of projects inside the programme delivered by over 49 partners across the health, education, social care, and VCSE sector. In 2024 there was 25,924 activity sessions delivered through the Family Hub Partnership. The Family Hub offer continues to expand activities and services available to local families based on the national expectations and in response to local needs. For example, the establishment of a special support group for families who have spent considerable time in their early parenting present on the UHCW neonatal ward, was launched in December 2024. There are also now Bumps Baby & Beyond sessions, specialist workshops for newly arrived families, father focus work in engaging dads to access the Family Hub offer and to be a part in shaping future activities, and an enhanced offer to families with children with SEND. Parents can now also choose to register the birth of their baby currently at two Family Hubs across the city – Mosaic and The Moat Family Hubs. To date 554 parents have chosen to register the birth of their baby at Family Hub locations across the city. This offer is being extended to one further Family Hub as part of a phased Implementation plan.

The Digital Offer

"Coventry Families" portal www.coventryfamilies.co.uk is now live and utilised across the city. The portal provides accessible support, advice, information and resources to families. Coventry Families offers a one stop digital offer to families providing easy access to support whenever needed with 24/7 availability and is accessible on a range of devices including smartphones, tablets, laptops or Family Hub front facing PC available in every Family Hub building.

Access to the "Coventry Families" portal has enabled families to access a range of resources via digital means and increasing user data shows that families are accessing the portal to seek information, support and guidance from a trusted source that provides access to services using virtual methods. Data of unique users who have accessed the portal shows an increase of 50% from 3,500 in September 2024 to 7,000 in December 2024. Implementation of Phase 2 is underway that will see developments within the portal to enable users to access automated pathways that are tailored to their individual needs and will enhance a personalised experience.

Family Hub Access

Coventry Family Hubs continue to offer accessible services to local families that is available to all. The Family Hub offer now includes activities that are delivered across evenings and weekends in response to local need. Family Hub Registration figures continue to increase with over 12,000 families now registered (through their Go CV card). In 2024 there have been 157,027 attendees at Family Hub activities.

In November 2024, Family Hubs hosted 40 different types of sessions delivered by the Family Hub network of services, accessed by over 3,750 members of the public. During the Christmas vacation over 600 families accessed the Hubs as warm spaces to spend time with their children, engage in positive activities and access services as needed.

All Family Hubs now have in place a fully digitalised data collection process which feeds the data dashboards to evidence the reach of Family Hub services. This ensures the data collection is more robust, and access is easier for families and attendees.

Family Hub Connections – The Family Hub Network

A wide range of partners are involved in the delivery of a connected Family Hub offer that involves delivery within Family Hub sites and from venues across the Family Hub reach area. Family Hub Network forums have been established and has been further enhanced and developed at a local level. These provide opportunities for practitioners across the network opportunity to collaborate with a wide range of services and organisations and deliver the offer throughout the community, beyond the 8 Family Hub buildings.

A small team of Family Hub Community Practitioners are also deployed across a range of community settings to deliver aspects of the Family Hub Offer inside communities alongside other offers such as in Food Hubs, schools, UHCW and Coffee Tots at the Wave, CV Life.

Family Hub Relationships

As part of continued development of the Family Hub delivery regular Family Hub Surveys are undertaken to seek views of families regarding their experience of accessing Family Hub Services.

A recent Family Hub survey completed in November 2024 where 389 responses were received that:

- 389 (100 %) families accessing Family Hub activities felt welcomed
- 384 (99 %) families received the help they needed.
- 385 (99 %) families rated their experience as good or better with 4 families rating their experience as being satisfactory and met their needs

A survey was also undertaken to capture the views of families who had not yet accessed Family Hub services with 294 families' making a response.

Findings show that more families would actively seek help from across the Family Hub Offer. Families indicated they wanted to see expanded offer relating to SEND, Youth provision and support for Childrens emotional wellbeing.

3.4 Update on Supporting Families programme

Local Authority Early Help is delivered across four locality teams (South, West, East, Central). Each Locality comprises of two Supporting Families Team Leaders and 10 full time equivalent practitioners (on full establishment). These are aligned to the Help and Protection area social work teams, and currently based within the Family Hub buildings.

Our current Supporting Families Delivery Model has been fully in place since Jan 2024, and is based on a 16-week intervention of intensive family support with a focus on delivering improved outcomes for children and families that result in sustainable change.

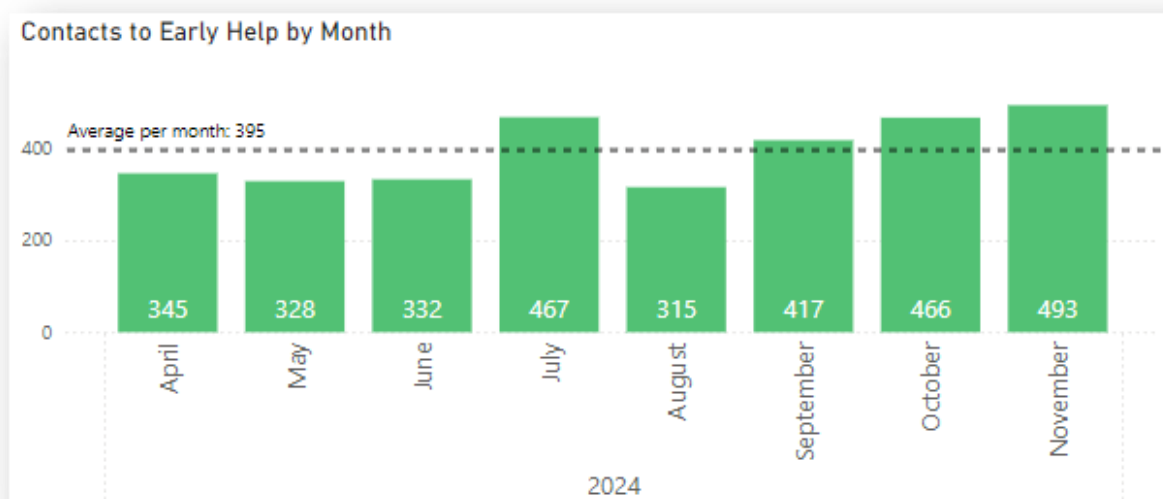
Since Jan 2024 the Supporting Families Teams work with children and families where 3 or more needs as identified using the Supporting Families Framework.

The key principles of practice are:

- A Whole family approach that is child centred and thinks family
- A multi-agency response- providing a Team around the family
- SMART outcome focused plans
- Relational practice: High Challenge and High Support
- Intensive intervention- regular and meaningful support identified through the Early Help Assessment and delivered through an Early Help Plan

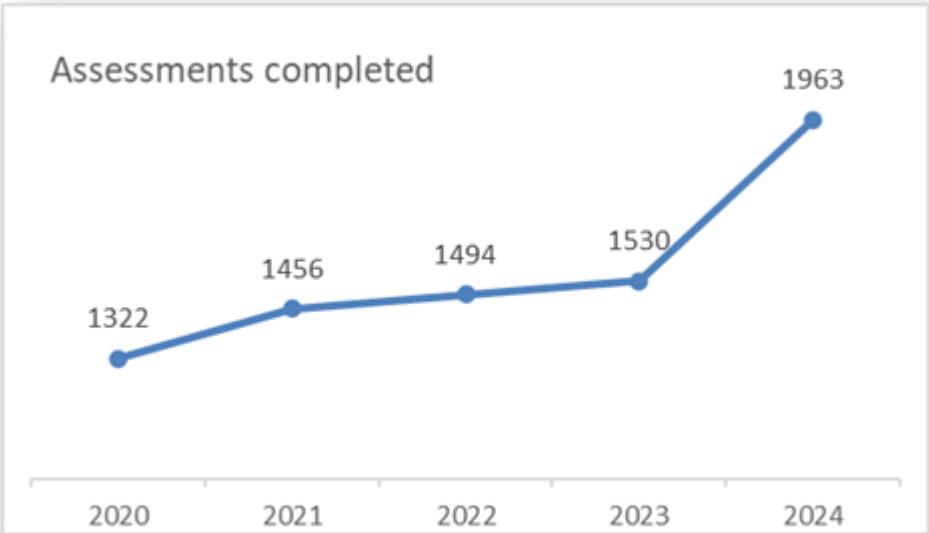
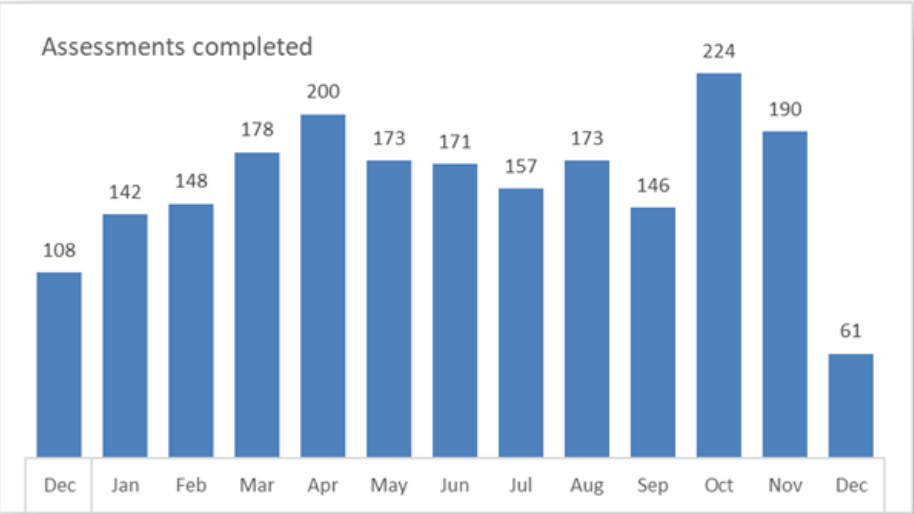
Early Help Requests for Support

Anyone can request Early Help by coming into a Family Hub, telephone or completing an on-line request. There are also diversions from the MASH and step downs from social care. There have been 3195 requests for support in 2024, with an average of 395 children and young people referred for support per month since.

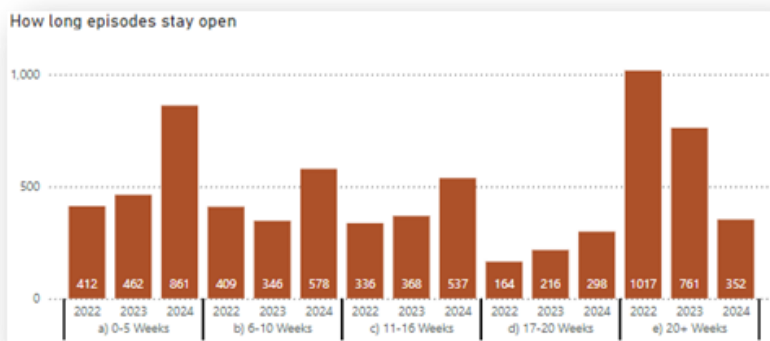


Episodes Opened in Early Help: In 2024, we experienced a significant increase in episodes opened in Early Help, averaging 225 Early Help episodes/Families started per month. This is the highest number recorded in Coventry since 2017.

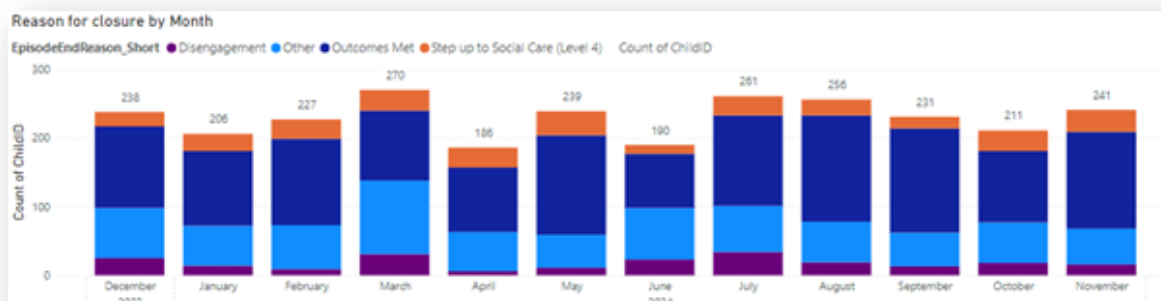
Early Help Assessments: This year saw a sharp rise in Early Help Assessments, with 1,963 in 2024, averaging 169 per month, and significant year on year progress has been made since 2020.



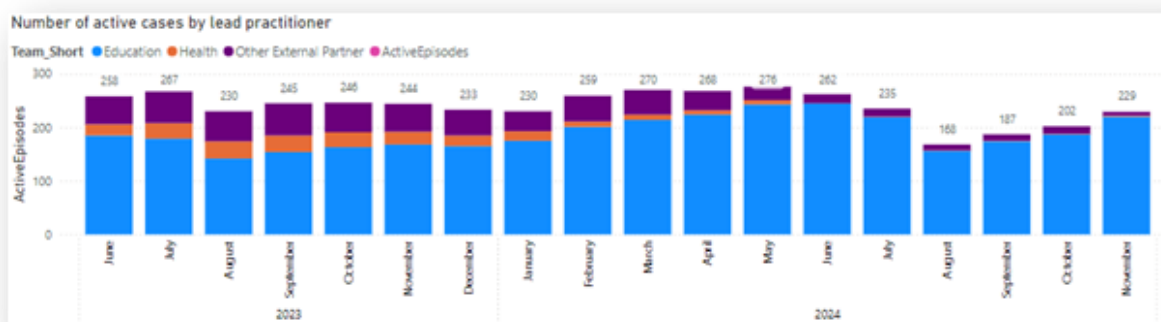
16-Week Practice Model: The 16-week intervention includes the completion of a whole Family Assessment, the development of a Family Plan that considers all the identified needs and intervention, and intensive support that progresses the plan which can be successful and can be validated by the Supporting Families Outcomes. This intensive time bound support has enhanced a year-on-year reduction in episodes lasting longer than 20 weeks. In 2024, 87% of all episodes concluded within the 16-week intervention period.



- Episodes Closed:** A total of 2,739 episodes were closed in 2024, a 25% increase compared to 2023. Notably, episodes closing with “Outcomes Met” (according to S.F Criteria) increased by 17% this year to 54%, achieving the highest percentage ratio in the last seven years.



Partner-led Early Help Episodes: A total of 2780 episodes opened in 2024, only 469 (16.9%) of which were held directly by our partners, with an additional 32 held by Early Help Co-ordinators. The vast majority of these were held by school’s staff acting as lead practitioners (428), 2 were held by health and 39 by other partners. Progress continues with partners managing cases and recording on EHM, with 458 episodes started this year, the highest figure in the last three years.



The Supporting Families Programme will cease as of the end of March 2025, as a standalone programme to make way for the development of Family Help. Whilst we transition into the new model of help it is essential that we maintain and build upon the progress to date to ensure that families receive the right help at the right time through a partnership approach of delivery of targeted Early Help and effective whole family support.

It is also essential that practitioners across the partnership use EHM to record their Early Help involvement with families.

4 How does this work contribute to the delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?

4.1 *Provide a brief description of how this work contributes to the delivery of the [Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-26](#)*

- **Tackling loneliness and social isolation for all:** All Family Hubs are designated as warm spaces and provide a range of free fun, and stimulating activities for children, young parents, and adults to help people learn together, socialise, make new connections and friendships.
- **Improving mental health for all:** There are a range of mental health and wellbeing services and sessions available through the Family Hub and Early Help Offer including Parents in Mind, Mamta, Kooth, Compass, Specialist HV perinatal mental health team offering VIG, and more informal mental resilience support through our weekly WOW groups. There is also a new pathway of support for new fathers through our Fatherhood Solutions service. We also fund counselling service to families and to young people through our Reducing Parental Conflict grant from DWP.
- **Focus on employment and homelessness as a prevention opportunity:** Job Shop Coaches work regularly from inside the Family Hub buildings and offer drop-in sessions and booked appointments to local residents to help access training and employment. Close integrated working takes place between Housing and Children Services, including data sharing to help identify families in need of family support who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Early Help contact all families who are in prevention or relief H&H duty and offer additional family support. Early Help is also offered to families living in TA such as Cradoc Hall and Frank Walsh House and a group for Eritrean women was developed and hosted at The Moat Family Hub to specifically support a number of Eritrean families who are in TA.
- **Strengthen work with communities:** The 8 Family Hubs all work in partnership with the local communities they are based within, forming a strong Family Hub network with a range of local partners. We contribute to stakeholder forums, collaborate to co-develop and co-deliver local community events and also support community offers such as Food Hubs. The Family Hub Community Practitioners also deliver “pop up” Family Hub Offers in communities that are not within close proximity to a Family Hub building, such as in Holbrooks Community Centre, inside Coffee Tots at the Wave and within some of the wards at UHCW.
- **The need for co-production to achieve the priorities and the importance of engaging with the community to influence and design solutions-** The Family Hub Offer includes a Parent Voice network of parents and Carers that support the development and delivery of services. There are currently 257 individuals involved and may have received training to be Parent Champions and are active in our governance arrangements, acting as volunteers and undertaking surveys and participatory activities across the Family Hub Offer. We also have a Youth Inspectors Programme which includes young people inspecting each Family Hub annually and producing an action plan for the management, staff and partners to respond to.
- **Prioritising prevention:** our Supporting Families Team, use the Early Help Assessment all seek to understand and address the root causes of problems that families are experiencing, meeting children and young people and listening to their

wishes and feelings, and aspirations which form the Early Help Plan for that family. The family plan is outcome focused and is supported by the lead practitioner co-ordinating a team around the family to ensure that positive outcomes are achieved with the family and to help escalation of issues and then need for statutory services wherever possible.

- **Co-ordinating services:** The Family Hub Offer is delivered through a partnership approach with over 40 partner agencies delivering services. The Supporting Families Programme is based on a team around the family model, helping to co-ordinate services to work together in a whole family way to achieve positive outcomes for families. The 10 Early Help Outcome Groups, which as subgroups of the Early Help Strategic Partnership work together to address challenges such as financial instability, domestic abuse, and housing and homelessness at a system level to facilitate strategic and operational change.
- **Sharing responsibility:** through the Early Help Partnership, the Early Help Outcome Groups, the Family Hub & Start for Life Programme Board and the Family Hub Network many services across the health, care, social support, voluntary, community and faith-based sector work together with residents to transform the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Appendices

Appendix 1 ~ Role of the Statutory safeguarding Partners in Early Help and Prevention, as part of their safeguarding responsibilities.

Appendix 2 Single page summary of the Early Help Strategy (2022-2025)

Appendix 3 : The Early Help System Guide

Appendix 4: Children's Social Care Reforms as described by the Labour Government, Dec 2024 (including details related to the establishment of Family Help)

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Appendix 1

The role of the Statutory Safeguarding Partners in Early Help and Prevention, as part of their safeguarding responsibilities.

[“Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2024”](#) guidance also emphasizes the importance of early help in safeguarding children and the role that **educational staff** play in safeguarding children through early intervention and collaboration with other agencies through

1. Early Identification: All school and college staff should be prepared to identify children who may benefit from early help. This means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child’s life.
2. Vulnerable Groups: Staff should be particularly alert to the potential need for early help for children who are disabled, have special educational needs, are young carers, show signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, or are frequently missing/goes missing from care or home.
3. Multi-Agency Working: Effective early help relies on local agencies working together to identify children and families who would benefit from early help, undertake an assessment of the need for early help, and provide targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family.
4. Role of Staff: School and college staff should be aware of the early help process and understand their role in it. This includes identifying emerging problems, liaising with the designated safeguarding lead, and sharing information with other professionals to support early identification and assessment.

[The Healthy Child Programme](#) outlines prevention and early intervention activities from preconception to 19 years of age (or 25 for those with statutory entitlements) undertaken by **Universal and targeted public health services** provided by health visiting and school nursing teams, who are crucial component of the ‘whole system’ of support for children and young people’s health and wellbeing. The core public health offer for all children includes:

- child health surveillance (including infant physical examination) and development reviews
- child health protection and screening
- information, advice and support for children, young people and families or carers
- **early intervention and targeted support for families with additional needs**
- health promotion and prevention by the multidisciplinary team
- defined support in early years and education settings for children with additional and complex health needs
- additional or targeted public health nursing support as identified in the joint strategic needs assessment, for example, support for children in care, young carers, or children of military families

Public health nursing services provide universal support and due to their close relationships with families or carers and community settings, including early years and

education settings, health visitors and school nurses are key in supporting the local authority area's early help system, which encompasses early intervention and the Supporting Families Programme .

Police play a crucial role in early help by working collaboratively with other agencies to identify and support children and families in early help and prevention, namely by

1. **Early Identification:** Police officers, through their interactions with the community, can identify children and families who may benefit from early help. This includes recognizing signs of neglect, abuse, or other risk factors¹.
2. **Information Sharing:** Effective early help relies on the timely sharing of information between police and other agencies. This ensures that all relevant parties are aware of the family's needs and can coordinate their support efforts.
3. **Multi-Agency Collaboration:** Police work alongside health services, education providers, social services, and other partners to provide a comprehensive support network for families. This collaborative approach helps to address issues before they escalate.
4. **Training and Awareness:** Police officers receive training to understand the principles of early help and how to apply them in their daily work. This includes recognizing risk factors and knowing how to refer families to appropriate services
5. **Community Engagement:** By engaging with the community, police can build trust and encourage families to seek help early. This proactive approach helps to create a safer and more supportive environment for children and families

West Midlands Police emphasize the importance of early intervention in several key areas:

1. **Youth Intervention:** The Early Intervention Youth Fund focuses on providing diversionary activities for young people at risk of involvement in crime. This includes targeted interventions, trauma-informed provision, and collaboration with other agencies to support vulnerable youth. There are a number of programmes of support funded by the Violence Reduction Unit including the My Tomorrow Programme.
2. **Domestic Abuse:** Through initiatives like Operation Encompass, West Midlands Police aim to reduce the long-term impacts of domestic abuse by providing early intervention and support. When police attend incidents of domestic violence involving children, they notify the designated safeguarding lead at the child's school to ensure immediate support.
3. **Community Engagement:** The police work closely with local communities to identify and address issues early, preventing them from escalating. This involves building trust and encouraging families to seek help before problems become more serious.

Appendix 2 : Early Help Strategy – One page summary

Summary

COVENTRY EARLY HELP STRATEGY 2023 – 2025

Our Vision

We want Coventry to be the best city in the UK for all our children, young people, and their families, to live and grow up in. We want children to be valued, feel safe, be healthy and have opportunities.

We aim to connect people together to provide the right help at the right time with the right people so that all children and families can thrive.

be & feel valued

be & feel safe

be & feel healthy

Have opportunities

Who we want to help

The Early Help Offer should support all children and families to get the help they need. We also especially want to help children and young people who:

1. are not in education or at risk of exclusion
2. may not achieve a good level of development by the end of reception
3. are physically or emotionally unwell
4. have been impacted by drug or alcohol misuse
5. may live in families with difficult relationships
6. have experienced trauma, abuse, or exploitation
7. are impacted by crime
8. have experienced the impact of domestic abuse
9. don't live in a safe or secure home that they can call their own
10. are living in poverty

What we commit to do

Family Voice and Experience - listen and act on what families tell us

Support children and families to have their say and act on what they tell us

Shift decision making from services back to families

Listen carefully and build on the strengths of families

Include people with lived experiences who can help shape delivery of the early help offer

Workforce - Develop our shared language, culture, and practice

Ensure families know how and where to access help

Increase the range of partners who act as lead practitioners for families coordinating early help assessments and plans

Develop a workforce plan to strengthen the quality of practice

Early help will be seen as everyone's responsibility

Communities - Build capacity and resilience, help earlier

Work in partnership with the voluntary, community and faith-based sector and value everyone's contribution in providing early help

Connect services to work together in the Family Hub, in the community and by providing a virtual offer

Work with whole families to build effective teams of people who can support them

Leadership - Focus on our shared priorities

Develop an Strategic Early Help Partnership that will hold each other to account

Provide more help earlier

Establish a shared outcome framework with transparent performance measures that evidences positive impact on families' lives

Evaluate and learn what is working well and what we need to improve on

Data - Make better use of data and insights to plan and deliver better services

Use data to proactively offer early help to those that may need it

Share data so we can effectively plan, deliver, and evaluate the early help offer

All use the same case management system to record the help provided

Be innovative on how we can use data and what we know to help more families

Find the full Coventry Early Help Strategy at: www.coventry.gov.uk/earlyhelpstrategy

Appendix 3: The Early Help System Guide

[The Early Help System Guide](#) provides a toolkit to assist local strategic partnerships responsible for their early help system in their area. Effective early help and prevention provision relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to:

- **identify** children and families who would benefit from early help Universal services are available to all children and families. They are provided by a range of agencies such as health and education. GPs, health visitors and school nurses are some examples of this type of service provision.
 - **undertake an assessment** of the need for early help which considers the needs of all members of the family
 - **ensure good ongoing communication**, for example, through regular meetings between practitioners who are working with the family
 - **co-ordinate** and/or provide support as part of a plan to improve outcomes. This plan will be designed together with the child and family, and updated as and when the child and family needs change
 - **engage effectively with families and their family network**, making use of family group decision-making, such as family group conferences, to help meet the needs of the child
- The role of lead practitioner is to co-ordinate the activity around the family, ensure the assessment and the family plan responds to all needs identified, and lead on ensuring the family co-produce the plan. The plan might include the family network. The time commitment to deliver this role will vary family by family depending on the complexity of their needs. The lead practitioner role can be held by a range of practitioners. In Coventry the workforce table (of the Early Help system guide) describes the expectations of the workforce across the system.

A strong Early Help System is made up of many different types of practitioners and services who operate together to provide a coherent and coordinated offer. This table defines the likely role of different types of practitioners in the Early Help System when contributing to that early help offer, as agreed by the Coventry Safeguarding Children’s Partnership.

Role in delivering Early Help	What does this look like?	Expectations	Who is likely to undertake this role with a family?
Frequent and modelling – Lead Practitioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These practitioners support families with multiple needs and act as Lead Practitioner for most families they meet. • They provide whole family, sometimes intensive, support for families often in their home, being proactive to reach out to families where needed. • They are experts in processes to support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a lead practitioner for a family and convene the team around the family. • Identify children in need of early help. • Undertake Early Help assessments. • Develop Early Help plans. • Record on EHM, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s Social Workers. • Supporting Families Practitioners. • Family Nurses Practitioners. • Pastoral Leads/ Learning Mentors in Education Settings.

	<p>families with multiple needs and help families, other professionals, commissioned organisations, and voluntary and community groups to understand those needs, advocating where necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These practitioners may support others with undertaking the lead practitioner role. 	<p>evidence early help and successful outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate confidently the Early Help offer to children and families. 	
<p>Regular and Promoting Early Help</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These practitioners are often the first to identify a family's need for help or support, are able to assess the needs of all members of the family, and form the core of a team around the family (TAFs). • They connect families with support in their community. • They are well versed in processes to support families with multiple needs and help families to understand them. • They may be the Lead Practitioner to start the Early Help process and may retain this role if they are the most appropriate person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate confidently the Early Help offer to children and families. • Identify children in need of early help. • Initiate early help assessments. • Deliver single agency early help and record as a key agency on EHM. • Make an early help request if more support is required. • Be part of the Team around the family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Hub practitioners. • Health visitors. • School nurses. • Safeguarding leads and SENCOs. in education settings. • Early years settings including nurseries – nursery SENCOs and designated safeguarding leads. • Community children's nurses. • Family Hub and School Police Community Support Officers.

<p>Sometimes and Active</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These practitioners bring specialist expertise and therefore need to be part of a team around the family when required / involved. • They connect families with support in their community but also know how to start the process to bring wider support around a family where there are several needs. • They may act as the Lead Practitioner if they are the most appropriate person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be part of a team around the family and update the Lead Practitioner on progress towards identified actions. • Communicate confidently the Early Help offer to children and families. • Identify children in need of early help. • Make an early help request if more support is required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing / tenancy officers and homelessness advisors. • Young people's substance misuse services. • Adult substance misuse workers. • Child and adolescent / primary mental health workers. • Midwives. • Youth Justice Team. • Neighbourhood police officers. • Supporting families employment advisers. • SEND practitioners. • Attendance and Inclusion Officers. • Members of the youth partnership. • Allied health professionals. • Debt/finance and legal advice services. • Prevent Service. • Specialist domestic and sexual abuse services. • Family relationship and advisory service.
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<p>Occasional and Aware/ Connected – Request</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These practitioners or volunteers understand they are part of a system of support which ‘helps’ people. • They know how to ask questions to explore the wider needs families may have. • They know how to connect to other support for families. • These practitioners bring specialist expertise and need to be part of a team around the family when required • They don’t usually act as a Lead Practitioner unless this is in the family’s best interests. • They are active users of the local on- line directory of services to identify the right help for a family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate confidently the Early Help Offer to Children and Families. • Identify children in need of early help. • Make an early help request if more support is required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probation officers. • Adult mental health workers. • Adult social workers. • Faith community leaders. • Work coaches. • GPs, practice nurses and safeguarding leads. • Library staff. • Social prescribers. • Positive Parenting Team. • Uniformed services. • Family Learning/ Adult Education. • A&E staff. • Community Initiative to Reduce Violence Navigators (CIRV). • Voluntary and Community sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Club leaders - School club providers - Sports coaches - Community staff and volunteers - Stay and Play leaders - Foodbank Teams - Social supermarkets
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Appendix 4: Children’s Social Care Reforms

The Labour Party Manifesto made a range of commitments related to children’s social care to support every child should have a loving, secure home. They committed to build opportunity for all, by giving every child:

- The best start in life
- Family security
- Helping every child to achieve and thrive
- Building skills for opportunity and growth

Policy statement – Keeping children safe, helping families thrive

On November 18, 2024, the government published ‘Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive’. This policy statement set out the government’s ambitious approach to rebalancing the children’s social care system toward earlier intervention through Family Help and strengthened multi-agency child protection. The policy statement, outlines the vision for the future children’s social care system and our core legislative proposals, built around creating a system which:

- works with the whole family so more children and young people can thrive in their family
- prioritises kinship care for children who cannot live safely with their parents
- supports children in care and care leavers to live healthy and happy lives
- provides a high quality of care, which all children deserve
- takes action to end excessive profit-making by care providers
- works effectively across agencies and empowers professionals working within it

The policy statement also builds on the National Framework for Children's Social Care, published in December 2023, which sets a clear vision for the outcomes for the whole system to achieve. This includes the establishment of the Families First Partnership Programme to support the delivery of reforms, with local areas beginning their transformation from April 2025. This will include the establishment of Family Help.

The vision for Family Help

Aim: We want families to receive **high quality support at the earliest opportunity**, so that they can overcome challenges, stay together and thrive

How: Creating a **seamless, non-stigmatising offer of support** underpinned by whole-family approach and working in a strengths-based way. This will be underpinned by the following key components:

- Merging the strengths of targeted early help and section 17 (Child in Need) work, with flexibility on who leads direct work with families to support relationship building
- Utilising multi-disciplinary teams, delivering support out of community-based settings
- Establishing the Family Help Lead Practitioner role – which can include Social Workers

❑ Creating new Family Help assessments and plans, to identify needs and capture the services to be provided for children and families

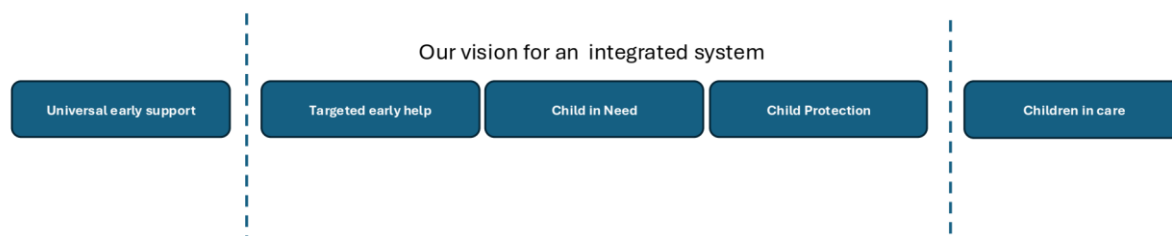
❑ Reform your approach to the front door, to support decision making and reduce stigma

This will form part of an end-to-end system of support – building out of Family Hubs (where they exist) through to the edge of care – recognising that families arrive at different parts of the system and their needs may increase or decrease over time

The Family Help model responds directly to the issues with family support that was highlighted by the Independent Care Review – and builds on evidence of effective practice from a range of programmes including the Supporting Families Programme, Family Safeguarding, Family Valued, Pause and Family Hubs.

Family Help and child protection reforms must be delivered as a single integrated system that supports the wellbeing of and protects all children from significant harm, inside and outside of the home. This will mean Family Help Lead Practitioners working alongside multi-agency child protection teams, as they continue to maintain relationships with the family.

By **multi agency**, we mean agencies with responsibilities for families working together within their agency remit to deliver support and services to families. By **multi-disciplinary** we mean teams of practitioners who bring specialist skills, knowledge and expertise and may be from the same agency or multi-agency in makeup.



Family help and child protection as an integrated system

Family Help and child protection must be delivered as a single integrated system that protects all children from significant harm, inside and outside of the home. Children will have different needs and vulnerabilities and, as such, the type of significant harm they experience and the context in which this happens will vary significantly.

We want to move to a reformed system where FHLPs, supported by expertise from a lead child protection practitioner (LCPP), **will be the main practitioner responsible for child protection direct practice with families**. When child protection matters arise, they will maintain the relationship with the family and continue to coordinate support and services. Where there are significant harm concerns, **the LCPP will be specifically responsible for statutory child protection decisions with input from the wider MACPT**. The FHLP will continue to be involved in direct practice throughout. To ensure that we keep changes of relationship to a minimum, it is only once a child protection plan is in place that the FHLP must be a social worker.

The Independent Review of Children’s Social Care and the National Panel Review: Child Protection in England (May 2022), set out a number of recommendations for strengthening the child protection system

Where children are at risk of harm, we should intervene decisively through an expert and multi-agency child protection response

Social work expertise	Multi-agency working	Extra familial harms	Parental engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct work with children and families is often undertaken by inexperienced practitioners. There are no requirements for specific training or certified roles post qualification • Those responding to significant harm need to have the highest level of skill and knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-agency arrangements are more fragmented and fractured than they should be, and information sharing is poor • Key child protection agencies work together in a fully integrated way and information sharing is improved so that professionals have a clear and accurate picture of whether a child is at risk of harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child protection framework is unsuited for extra familial harms, doesn't identify and respond to risk well and too often blames parents • Multi-agency working is a particular challenge in this area • Extra familial harms get a bespoke child protection response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents report poor experiences and struggling to navigate child protection processes; poor parental engagement in child protection is a contributing factor to serious incidents. • Child protection effectively engages families when there are concerns
<p>Child protection and family help should be an integrated system with practitioners co-working cases where the threshold for child protection investigation (Children Act 1989) is reached</p>			