

Early Help Framework

A guide for everyone working with children and their families with early help needs in the City of Southend-on-Sea.



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SOUTHEND
Safeguarding
Partnership



Southend-on-Sea
City Council

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Introduction

This framework is for everyone who works with children and their families with early help needs in Southend.

It sets out the Pathway which all practitioners must follow in identifying, raising, and responding to concerns about children requiring early help and should be read in conjunction with the Southend Continuum of Need Threshold Document, *'Right Help, Right Service, Right Time'*.

Professionals need to use their judgement when considering the range and scale of a child and family's needs. This includes the strengths and protective factors that surround the child and family.

The framework is not designed to be prescriptive, exhaustive or as a definitive instruction manual on how to start or end support from a particular service. It is designed to be used as an aid for all who work with children and families at the early help level of need, to support good decision making about what types of help will best meet a child or family's needs.

The critical features of an effective early help offer are:

- a multi-disciplinary approach that brings a range of professional skills and expertise to bear through a "Team Around the Family" approach.
- a relationship with a trusted Lead Professional who can engage the child and their family, and coordinate the support needed from other agencies.
- practice that empowers families and helps them to develop the capacity to resolve their own problems.
- a holistic approach that addresses children's needs in the wider family context
- simple, streamlined referral processes and plans.

Southend integrated early help offer

Providing advice, support and intervention when a child & their family have needs that cannot be met by universal services alone.

All Local Authority areas should have an early help offer which provides assistance to families at the earliest opportunity (Right Help from the Right Service at the Right Time).

It identifies the need for help for children and families as soon as problems start to emerge, or when there is a strong likelihood that problems will emerge in the future.

The early help available to children and their families in Southend is made up of different types of services designed to reduce or prevent specific problems from escalating or becoming entrenched.

It is not just for very young children as problems may emerge at any point throughout childhood and adolescence.

By collaborating to form the local early help offer we collectively agree to work with children and families to prevent their needs escalating. This may help to prevent them from requiring more complex support from the

Supporting Families team or Children's Social Care. Southend-on-Sea has a collaborative Early Help Strategy produced jointly by the Local Authority and partners, which outlines a shared commitment to early help for our children and families across the City.

A good support system is a balanced system whereby children and families know who to ask for support and from where they will receive this support.

Therefore, an integral part of the early help offer is that all partners working with children and their families can provide support as soon as needs arise and are able to work collaboratively in order to provide this in accordance with need that has been identified. Children can move between the levels at different times in their lives, or at different times during agencies' contact with them. Support might be provided from one agency or several different agencies, depending on individual need, but throughout, successful partnership working is supported by transparent communication with families and between professionals.

Early help system



Earlier, solution focused interventions are likely to prevent problems from escalating.

By working in collaboration with the child or young person, their family and other practitioners and focusing on the family's strengths, we can ensure that any agreed activity reflects the family's priorities and works towards preventing problems before they occur.

The aim is that, as far as possible, children's needs should be met within universal provision. At Level 2, the early help stage, children of all ages and abilities have additional or emerging early help needs, that are starting to impact on their daily life and families may be beginning to experience problems coping alone.

These needs can no longer be met through universal services in isolation and require additional help from one or more services, working together to promote welfare and wellbeing and reduce the likelihood of more significant intervention.

The service or professional that knows the child or family best should, as a starting point, instigate an honest and open conversation in which they share their concerns at the earliest point.

All services working with children and families play a part in the early help offer and by working together across the whole system, resources can be identified and aligned, and a minimal level of support can be provided to ensure outcomes are achieved with as little disruption to family life as possible.

It is essential that schools, early years settings, health colleagues (midwives, school nurses, health visitors, GPs, hospital staff, CAMHS etc), adult services, specialist commissioned services (domestic abuse services, drug & alcohol services etc), community groups, voluntary services, youth services, children's centres and all those delivering support at Level 2 as part of the Early Help Offer:

- Are able to understand that they are part of this whole system of support.
- Are able to communicate confidently the Early Help offer to children and families.
- Are able to identify a family's need for help or support at the earliest opportunity.
- Know how to ask questions to explore the wider needs families may have.
- Are able to connect families with support in their community and know how to start the process to coordinate wider support around a family where there are several needs.
- Are able to act as the Lead Practitioner if they are the most appropriate person or be part of a team around the family.
- Are able to assess the needs of all members of the family by way of an Early Help Plan.
- Play a part in enabling families to improve outcomes for their children.

Our early help Pledge to children and families in Southend-on-Sea

Safe

We will provide the right support for children and their families at the earliest opportunity, through to specialist and statutory interventions. This will ensure the welfare and safety of vulnerable children and young people.

Open

We will actively listen and work in an open and honest way with children, young people and their families.

Understanding

We will work with all families to help them to thrive and do as well as they can, and not just reduce risk or survive.

Timely

We will ensure our services are of a high standard and deliver best outcomes for children and young people within reasonable timescales.

Honest

We will build on the strengths and resilience of families and communities through building strong relationships and practicing respectfully.

Empowered

We will empower families to make changes and build resilience, by working in partnership with families and across Partnerships.

Need

We will ensure families will have access to a number of interventions to support and meet their needs and we will act on what they tell us.

Determined

We will work hard together to find solutions and to overcome the challenges that we face.

Identifying children and families who would benefit from early help

The effectiveness of early identification is underpinned by professional responsibility both of the referring and of the receiving agency to ensure that if a family does not meet the threshold for specific services, action is taken to prevent any lower-level needs escalating, whilst also being alert to identifying children who without support will not reach their full potential.

Our early help offer therefore puts the responsibility on to all professionals to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs for individual children and families, irrespective of whether they are providing services to children or adults.

‘Working together’ recommends that professionals should be alert to the specific and potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled and has specific additional needs
- has special educational needs.
- is a young carer.
- is showing signs of engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour.
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health, domestic violence
- is showing early signs of abuse and / or neglect and / or sexual exploitation.

Likewise, whilst the Southend Early Help Partnership Strategy aims to improve outcomes for all of our children, by ensuring all children and their families receive the help they need at earliest opportunity it considers the following to be at heightened risk of vulnerability:

- Children who are at risk of, or experiencing, sexual exploitation
- Children associated with gangs and at risk of exploitation
- Children missing from home, care or education
- Families who are or at risk of being homeless and living in poor or unsuitable housing/accommodation
- Children with special educational/additional needs
- Children living in families where there is significant parental conflict
- Children and families at risk of social isolation
- Children living in poverty
- Young carers
- Children not engaging in regular, suitable, full-time education either at school or otherwise

What should happen if these needs are identified

1. Early Help Plans are created using a Team Around the Family Approach. The Early Help Plans are created by the professionals who know the family the best and should be reviewed by holding a Team around the Family Meeting every three months.
2. Services can use their own plans but there is a Southend City template which may be helpful.
3. Completed plans should be submitted to L2EHA@southend.gov.uk for purposes defined in the framework.

With the family's agreement, the service or professional that knows the child or family best should agree an Early Help Plan focusing on the family's strengths, priorities and areas requiring additional support. By completing an Early Help Plan with the family it helps to identify what support works and allows families to see what they have achieved. Sharing success helps everyone to know what works. If families are not able to achieve these changes, it helps professionals and families to see what further support they need.

This should take account of the family's whole system, identifying resources already available as well as those that are needed but missing. It is also strongly recommended that a Graded Care Profile 2 tool is completed where neglect is a concern.

Where there is more than one service working alongside a child and family, it is helpful for the family and involved services to hold a Team Around the Family meeting, to share information and co-ordinate the Early Help Plan. If you are unsure if a Team Around the Family meeting is needed, the Early Help Advisor can provide advice and guidance regarding holding a Team Around the Family Meeting or putting together an Early Help Plan.

The Early Help Plan

An Early Help Plan (EHP) will enable a professional who is involved with a family to discuss with them any needs they have and what support they would like. They are helpful to share information and co-ordinate work alongside the child and family. A template is attached to this framework, but practitioners may choose to use or amend existing assessment and planning processes within their own agency.



An Early Help Plan is a way of coordinating the support that is offered to the family, often from within their own network of friends and family. It is a tool to use with them to discuss and record the needs, strengths, goals and views that they identify, leading to a plan to support them.

In most circumstances these will be reviewed every three months to consider the progress that has been made and any changes that are needed. They will also provide the evidence needed to demonstrate what support has been provided as a pre-requisite to a family being escalated to Level 3 or 4 provision.

A completed Early Help Plan remains the responsibility of the supporting agency/service to retain, in accordance with their own record keeping procedures.

A copy of the completed Early Help Plan should be given to all family members that were involved, including children and young people (age and understanding permitting).

At any time during the Early Help Plan process, it is important that practitioners feel they can ask for help and advice and draw on the expertise of other practitioners. All practitioners and services, schools and settings, working with families should feel able to consult with one another at any time before deciding on a course of action or way forward.

At closure, a copy of the completed Early Help Plan and outcomes achieved should be emailed to L2EHA@southend.gov.uk this will help Southend City to understand what early help support works best for families, which, in turn, will assist us in future planning and ensure we invest in those early help services

that make the most difference to the families we support.

Team around the family meeting

A Team around the Family (TAF) meeting provides an opportunity for the family, and other people who are involved, to come together and discuss how support can be offered. This is where the Early Help Plan is put together, and where the Lead Professional is identified.

A Team around the Family approach to involve agencies working alongside children and families provides an opportunity for practitioners to share information and consult with each other and obtain the perspective of other practitioners.

Lead professional

The Lead Professional will act as a conduit for the family to learn about and access services which will be helpful for them. Through regular review, with the family, of progress made, Lead Professionals will be able to identify when things are better and end early help support but also assess when more support is needed and make appropriate referrals. Usually, a Lead Professional will be someone who knows the family best and has identified with the family that additional support may be helpful. The next stage will be to meet the family and agree an Early Help Support plan. The plan should be reviewed to see that it has helped and once it has ended, should be closed and shared with the Early Help Advisor.

The Lead Professional will check in with family, jointly create the Early Help Plan and may make additional referrals for support.

What support is there for partners around early help activity?

Partners delivering early help may find it useful to seek advice and guidance from the Early Help Advisor.

This is a new role with a specific purpose of supporting professionals who are coordinating early help plans.

The advisor can be contacted at:

L2EHA@southend.gov.uk or call: [01702 215783](tel:01702215783)

The Early Help Advisor can offer:

- Information, advice and guidance about having difficult conversations.
- Networking events for professionals delivering early help.
- Support for professionals to create and evaluate outcome focused early help plans.
- Access to parenting programmes which may prevent a family's needs from escalating.
- Signposting to appropriate single agencies to ensure families have the right access to Level 2 support.
- Single Agency resource information
- Individual provider support on reviewing plans and outcomes.
- Individual case discussion (with consent)
- Advice on how to hold a Team around the Family meeting.



Early help outcomes



PRIDE & JOY

Children are 'school ready' and developing well, ready for their next stage in life.

Children grow up in families where financial exclusion and debt is minimised.

Adults and young people are supported to access employment, education and training.

Children and their families have access to affordable housing and support to sustain this.



SAFE & WELL

Children and families are provided with the right support at the right time and at the earliest opportunity.

Children and their families are healthier and emotionally well.

The number of parents and children involved or who are victims of crime, exploitation and/or anti-social behaviour is reduced.



OPPORTUNITY & PROSPERITY

Children have access to and are fully engaged in regular, suitable, full time education that allows them to achieve their full potential and educational inequalities are reduced.

Children and families are involved in the planning and design of the services they receive.

Early help and family support is seen as everyone's responsibility.



ACTIVE & INVOLVED

Children and families can trust the professionals working with them.

There is someone listening to them and appreciating their strengths.



CONNECTED & SMART

Families access support and help from within their local communities.

Children and families are less likely to experience digital poverty

What support is there for partners early help activity?

Indicators of need at Level 2

The information listed under each of the four headings should be considered as an indication of the likely level of need only. It is essential to talk to children and their families in more detail to explore the context and individual circumstances behind the presenting need. With this information the professional should be able to form a judgement as to the level of support needed. The indicators are provided as a guide and not a pre-determined level of response.

Health

- Inadequate, limited or restricted diet, e.g. no breakfast, no lunch money, being under or overweight
- Child is continually delayed in reaching developmental milestones
- Minor concerns re: diet, hygiene, clothing
- Dental problems untreated / decay
- Missing routine and non-routine health appointments
- Concerns about developmental progress: e.g. bedwetting/soiling; speech impediment
- Vulnerable to emotional problems, perhaps in response to life events such as parental separation e.g. child seems unduly anxious, angry or defiant for their age
- Experimenting with tobacco, alcohol or illegal drugs
- Frequent accidents
- Cause for concern or suspected child exploitation identified using the *SET Partnership Child Exploitation Pathway tool*

Emotional Development

- Some difficulties with family relationships
- Some difficulties with peer group relationships and with adults, e.g. 'clingy', anxious or withdrawn
- Some evidence of inappropriate responses and actions
- Limited engagement in play with others / has few or no friends
- Is at risk of suspension from school

Behavioural Development

- Not always able to understand how own actions impact on others
- Finds accepting responsibility for own actions difficult
- Responds inappropriately to boundaries / constructive guidance
- Finds positive interaction difficult with peers in unstructured contexts
- Additional needs for emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- One-off occasional short periods of missing from home.

Identity and Self-Esteem

- Some insecurities around identity expressed e.g. low self-esteem, sexuality, gender identity
- May experience bullying
- May be perpetrating bullying behaviour
- Lack of confidence is incapacitating
- Child provocative in behaviour/ appearance e.g. in appropriately dressed for school
- Child subject to persistent discrimination, e.g., racial, sexual or due to disabilities
- Victim of crime or bullying

Family and Social Relationships

- Lack of positive role models
- Child has some difficulties sustaining relationships
- Low levels of parental conflict / infrequent incidents of domestic dispute
- Unresolved issues arising from parents' separation, step-parenting or bereavement
- Occasional low level domestic abuse
- Children affected by parental imprisonment

Self-care skills and independence

- Disability limits amount of self care possible
- Periods of inadequate self care, e.g. poor hygiene
- Child is continually slow to develop age appropriate self care skills

Learning

- Some identified specific learning needs with targeted support and / or Special Education Needs and disabilities - Education, Health and Care Plan Language and communication difficulties
- Regular underachievement or not reaching education potential
- Poor punctuality and or emerging patterns of persistent moving to severe absence from school or nursery
- Not always engaged in play / learning, e.g. poor concentration
- No or limited access to appropriate books / toys
- Some suspensions

Basic care, ensuring safety and protection

- Basic care is not provided consistently
- Parent/carer requires advice on parenting issues
- Some concerns around child's physical needs being met
- Young, inexperienced parents
- Teenage pregnancy
- Inappropriate child care arrangements and/or too many carers
- Some exposure to dangerous situations in the home or community
- Unnecessary or frequent visits to GP or unplanned care settings e.g. Emergency Department
- Parent/carer stresses starting to affect ability to ensure child's safety

Emotional warmth and stability

- Inconsistent responses to child/young person by parent/carer
- Parents struggling to have their own emotional needs met
- Child/young person not able to develop other positive relationships
- Starting to show difficulties with attachments

Family functioning and well-being

- A child/young person is taking on a caring role in relation to their parent/carer, or is looking after younger siblings
- No effective support from extended family

Guidance, boundaries and stimulation

- Parent/carer offers inconsistent boundaries
- Lack of routine in the home
- Child spends considerable time alone, e.g. watching television
- Child is not often exposed to new experiences; has limited access to leisure activities
- Child can behave in an antisocial way in the neighbourhood, e.g. petty crime

Housing, work and income

- Family seeking asylum or refugees
- Periods of unemployment of parent/carer
- Parents/carers have limited formal education
- Low income
- Financial/debt problems
- Poor state of repair, temporary or overcrowded, or unsafe housing
- Intentionally homeless
- Serious debts/poverty impact on ability to have basic needs met
- Rent arrears put family at risk of eviction or proceedings initiated
- Not in Education, Employment or Training post-16

Social and community including education

- Some social exclusion or conflict experiences; low tolerance
- Community characterised by negativity towards children/young people
- Difficulty accessing community facilities

The Family Early Help Plan

(Created following Team around the Family meeting)

Early Help plan

Date	Time	Venue/Virtual	Co-ordinator	
Name of one child	DOB of the child	Address including postcode.		
Initial TAF	Review TAF	Final TAF		
Family members	Relationship in family	Did they attend?	Views gained?	Ethnicity
Please comment if the family has any additional communication needs				

Practitioners name	What is their role?	Contact details	Did they attend?	Did they provide a report?

Additional information	
Do any of the children have additional needs or disabilities	
Are the children Young Carers?	
Other people who support our family	

What are you worried about?

Please consider why an early help plan would be helpful. Please include family views

What is going well for this family and what resources/services are already in place?

What is going well? Who is providing support to the family, (family, friends, professionals) and what does this support looks like? What are the views of the child(ren), young person and/or their family?

What needs to change to make things better/safer for this child(ren)?

How will we know the plan has worked and can be ended. Please include family views

Please record on a scale of 0 to 10 the family and TAF members view of the current situation for the child/ren with 0 being as bad as it can be and 10 being child/ren provided with stable and consistent care and accessing universal services.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Next Steps

Create an early help plan	
Support to continue at universal level	
Additional support required: referral to Children's – Single Point of Contact (C-SPOC)	
Support to end for other reason (moved, consent denied, etc) please give details	

Family Plan

Next Steps/Further Action	By Who?	By When?

Review date:

Lead Professionals contact details:

I can confirm that the family have read and consented to the information in this plan and have also consented to this information being shared with the above agencies. Parents/Carers are in agreement with the contents of this plan.

Assessor name:

Signed (Assessor):

Parent/carer/child/young person name:

Signed (Parent/carer or child/young person):

Date signed (by Parent/carer or child/young person):

Enter a date:

Information Sharing and Consent

Information is collected as part of this Early Help plan so that we can understand the level of help and support you may need and also to inform services what may be useful for other families.

To ensure that you and your family are provided with the most effective support, it may be necessary to share/collect personal information about you and your family with our partner agencies / community groups, such as Children's Services, the NHS and other health providers (including GPs), Housing, Department of Work and Pensions, Police, Probation Services, Education, the Youth Offending Team, Office of National Statistics and Central Government. If more needs are identified during our checks than have been indicated on this plan, we will contact the lead professional to offer further services to you and your family.

In some circumstances, information can be shared between agencies without consent, for example where sharing information might help to prevent a crime or safeguard the welfare of a child or young person.


The full Southend-on-Sea City Council Privacy Notice can be viewed at:

www.southend.gov.uk/privacynotice

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Translations of this document in alternative languages are also available upon request.

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