

# Shropshire Early Help Strategy

## Strengthening Families through Early Help

**Helping children have a safe, happy and healthy family life**



2016-2018

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## Early help

Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years.

Early help can also prevent further problems arising, for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care.

Effective early help relies upon 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 which focuses on activity to significantly improve the outcomes for the child.

(Working Together 2015)

## 1. Introduction

Early Intervention to promote social and emotional development can significantly improve mental and physical health, educational attainment and employment opportunities. Early Intervention can also help to prevent criminal behaviour (especially violent behaviour), drug and alcohol misuse and teenage pregnancy.

What parents do is more important than who they are. Especially in a child's earliest years, the right kind of parenting is a bigger influence on their future than wealth, class, education or any other common social factor.

Early Intervention: The Next Steps  
An Independent Report to Her Majesty's Government Graham Allen MP (2011)

This refresh of the Early Help Strategy for Shropshire takes into account and reflects on local and national developments, including:-

- Ofsted thematic inspection: Early Help – Whose Responsibility 2015
- Troubled Families Phase 2 – Strengthening Families
- Shropshire Early Help Effectiveness Report 2015
- Health and Well-Being Board 2015
- Shropshire Council Financial Strategy 2016-2020
- LGA Peer Review Findings and Recommendations 2015

This refresh of the Early Help Strategy:

- reflects the changes and further developments to systems for identifying, assessing and providing early help and a whole family approach.
- takes into consideration transformation of services and ways of working, both in the organisation of children's services but also of other stakeholders and organisations including business and financial strategies of public services.
- takes into account our learning from; understanding of effectiveness, quality assurance and lessons from wider research and learning including points raised in the Ofsted National Thematic Inspection of Early Help.

## 2. Vision for Strengthening Families through Early Help in Shropshire

This vision for children and families sits within the wider Shropshire Council and Partnership approach to focus on prevention and well-being. Through the offer of advice, support and assistance to the people and communities of Shropshire it seeks to enable people and communities to help themselves. It puts the home and community at the centre for enabling care and support. This includes promoting engagement of the community and the voluntary sector to identify and meet the needs within their local communities.

In Shropshire the Troubled Families programme phase 2 is known as Strengthening Families.

The Strengthening Families Programme has a key role in integrating the early help process whilst championing the principles and working together towards jointly agreed goals. It sets out to develop successful ways of working with families at the earliest stage to help and support them to make positive changes. It also looks to develop resilience within families so that they feel able and confident to deal with problems should they escalate or arise in the future.

Inclusion of families into the programme is based upon a cluster of six headline problems. To be eligible for the expanded programme, each family must have at least two of the following six problems:

1. Parents or children involved in crime or anti-social behaviour.
2. Children who have not been attending school regularly.
3. Children who need help: children of all ages, who need help, are identified as in need or are subject to a Child Protection Plan.
4. Adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion or young people at risk of worklessness.
5. Families affected by domestic violence and abuse.
6. Parents or children with a range of health problems.

It is a vision that has a child-centred and coordinated approach. That works with the whole of the family to enable prevention and early assistance and where the voice of the child is heard,

the family voice is visible and their experience of life is understood by all professionals working with them.

- Parents are provided with support and guidance to meet the needs of their children, promoting their welfare through a positive experience of family life that takes into account the culture and needs of the family
- Early help is accessible to parents and young people locally and through a single point of coordination, making early help available at the first signs of problems and at the first point of call
- A lead professional takes the lead to co-ordinate provision and be a single point of contact for a child and their family, when a range of services are involved with the child or family and an integrated response is required
- Social work support is available to lead professionals in the identification and management of risk
- Services are better joined up and provide better access to information
- Integration meaning continuity of support delivered across time and provision, this means delivering services designed around individual needs and requires input from service users
- Systems and process for assessment, information sharing and review of early help are streamlined to reduce bureaucracy and maximise resource available for direct work with children and families
- Support to children and their families is provided by an equipped, knowledgeable, supported, committed and combined workforce. This means that services have better knowledge of each other and communities that are able to galvanise and mobilise to support and provide services of good quality that are accessible and work well together
- Early help services work to reduce the need for Child Protection and Looked After Child specialist services, but where this is required there is no unnecessary duplication or delay in providing the right service to protect children and achieve stability and permanence in their care arrangements
- Children, young people and families become stronger and more resilient through their experience of a solution focused and whole family approach.

### 3. Principles of Working

This strategy is based on key principles which will shape the way in which all partners will work together and in which all practitioners will deliver this work.

- Working takes into account and includes wherever possible a whole family assessment and agree one family plan
- The Lead Professional role is clear and robust and every family knows who their Lead Professional is
- Early help and intervention is the focus and we will be clear about the families' level of need, making use of the Multi- agency Guidance on Threshold Criteria
- Intervention and support needs to have a cost saving principle; directing resources to best effect and building capacity
- We will ensure our communications are clear
- We will value and invest in the children, young people and families' workforce and the contribution they make to improving lives
- We are committed to making every contact count.
- We will monitor and evaluate our early help work, listening to the voice of the child and family to ensure effective and efficient outcomes are achieved.

### 4. The Child and their Family

Families should be enabled to provide effective and safe parenting by being given the tools, skills and authority to assure their role in caring effectively thereby reducing the incidence of compromised parenting and the risk of neglect.

Effective direct work with children and young people must be promoted at all levels and the workforce should be encouraged to use a range of creative methods and tools to promote a solution focused model of working with whole families. This will be the key to sustaining change and building resilience.

Whilst adopting a whole family approach, children and young people's needs should remain paramount. The child or young person should be heard and their experience understood within the context of their family. Causes and explanations for problems and worries should be explored and understood so that solutions tackle the root cause of the problem not just the symptoms.

Consideration must be given to all children and young people within the family to ensure their needs are always visible.

Risk should be managed in an informed and measured way and professionals should not be overly optimistic where positive change is not being achieved and sustained for children.

Getting the right help at the right time for the right duration is essential in ensuring resources are targeted at those most in need of protection whilst effectively signposting others to suitable information and assistance.

Direct work with the young person should whenever possible, be part of an early help plan, developing their individual skills, strengths and resilience to support them as they move through childhood into adulthood.

Work with families based on practice that empowers and supports families to identify solutions to their own problems.

## 5. Related Strategies

Shropshire's Health and Well Being Strategy is overseen by the **Health and Well Being Board (HWBB)** who act to ensure that key leaders from the health and care system work together to improve the health and wellbeing of Shropshire residents. Health and Wellbeing Board members collaborate to understand their local community's needs, agree priorities and work together to plan how best to deliver services.

The vision of the Health and Well Being Strategy is "To help as many people as possible live long, happy and productive lives by promoting health and wellbeing at all stages of life."

Key features of the work of the Health and Well Being Board and the priorities for children and families are around early intervention, prevention, promoting good mental health and sustaining well-being. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment tells us the key health issues for Shropshire are:

- Mental health
- Rising obesity
- Child Poverty
- Ageing population

In addition, the rural nature of our county requires us to think carefully about how we organise services, influence policy, and support communities to make certain that Shropshire people are able to access the right support at the right time.

The importance of early help for families, tackling the key Strengthening Families 'problems' can be linked to the priorities of the Health and Well Being Board and the progress of service transformation is reported to the Health and Well Being Board.

The 2015 Health and Well Being Strategy can be found at:

<http://www.shropshiretogether.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/HWBB-Draft-strategy-2015.pdf>

The Board will deliver the vision and strategy through influence of all partner organisations to include the HWBB priorities in their organisational strategies and embed service transformation through all work plans including that of the **Children and Young People Trust Board**. The Children and Young People's Trust Board is chaired by the Director of Children's Services.

The Shropshire '[Children, Young People and Families Plan 2014-2015](#)' outlines the Children's Trust's plan for improving outcomes for children and young people. The focus is on ensuring early intervention and delivering preventative and targeted services to meet need.

The Children Trust priorities that are dependent and have outcomes for early help and strengthening families include:

- Develop an integrated, locality based support and assist mechanism to provide targeted early help to children and families in order to prevent problems getting worse and needing social care intervention. This mechanism will bridge together statutory and universal services and create closer working with local communities (Priority 1)
- Communicate effectively with partners and stakeholders to ensure clarity around Compass, the single point of access for early help and engagement of the community and universal services in the identification and delivery of early help on a locality basis (Priority 2)
- Ensure the implementation of a redesigned CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) that incorporates clear pathways and is supported by TAMHS (Targeted Mental Health Service) across Shropshire (Priority 9)
- Work with partners to promote the Shropshire Self-Harm Pathway; ensure that the pathway is promoted in schools and communicated to parents; ensure that the pathway is appropriately linked to service design, tier two support, GP surgeries, the voluntary and community sector to ensure that the self-harm pathway supports the work they do with children and families. (Priority 9.b)
- An Autism Needs Assessment for Shropshire that understands prevalence, service need/demand, and current provision across all sectors. (Priority 9.c)
- Ensure the signposting and roll out of the Solihull Parenting Programme across support agencies (Priority 10)
- Supporting community development and building community resilience through involvement of communities and the VCS in locality working (Priority 11)



- In conjunction with the Health and Wellbeing Board support the development of services that work to reduce inequalities, including the wider determinants of health (income, employment, housing) with a focus on the prevention agenda. (Priority 12)

The Shropshire Children, Young People and Families plan prepared by the Children's Trust will be refreshed for 2016-2017.

The Crime Reduction, Community Safety and Drug and Alcohol Strategy 2014-17 supports the work of early help in Shropshire, particularly around domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour. The link to the strategy can be found here <http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/32699/crime-reduction-and-community-safety-strategy-2014-17.pdf> link to the CSP Strategy and other documents particularly those that refer to domestic abuse and ASB.

### **Domestic Abuse**

Domestic abuse is a hidden issue. It is a problem that occurs within the home, often without witnesses. Yet it is a crime that has tremendous costs to family and community life and to national and local services. Research shows that children who have been exposed to domestic abuse are more likely than their peers to experience a wide range of difficulties. This can include behavioural, social, and emotional problems such as aggression. Children exposed to domestic abuse are more likely to experience difficulties in school. Research also indicates that males exposed to domestic abuse as children are more likely to engage in domestic abuse as adults; similarly, females are more likely to be victims. National statistics estimate that 1 in 4 women experience abuse or violence from a partner at sometime within their adult lives. Shropshire has a County Domestic Abuse Forum that consists of a wide range of agencies and organisations that are in a position to influence decision making and/or have access to local resources. The Forum has a dedicated website which gives information and advice to those who may be victims of domestic abuse.

For more information on the approach to Domestic Abuse go to: Shropshire County Domestic Abuse Forum – Freedom Shropshire website: <http://www.freedomshropshire.org.uk>

### **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

Safer Stronger Communities Partnership aims to reduce crime and disorder and substance misuse. It also aims to address anti-social behaviour. The Partnership recognises that anti-social behaviour can blight the lives of communities and effect perceptions of safety and security within individual's own homes as well as on the street. The image of any area can have a significant impact on crime. If an area is allowed to deteriorate community respect and care can be lost and result in an increase in crime and disorder. The term 'anti-social behaviour' acts as an umbrella description for a variety of disruptive and unacceptable behaviour that can have a detrimental impact on the quality of life within communities. Anti-social behaviour is

sometimes referred to as 'nuisance', 'neighbour disputes' or 'disorder'. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 definition is:

“Acting in a manner that caused or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as himself”

In order to address anti-social behaviour and make the reporting of ASB easier, the Partnership has established a single reporting number. To support the reporting number a small, Co-located Team has been established which consists of officers from Shropshire Council and Police, that will co-ordinate multi agency responses to ASB, deal with perpetrators and support victims. The single ASB reporting number is: 0345 678 9020.

<http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/crime-and-criminal-justice/anti-social-behaviour/>

## 6. Governance

The **Strengthening Families Through Early Help Partnership Sub Group** (previously the Early Help Partnership Group) is the multi-agency group responsible for the review of the Early Help Strategy. The group reports to the Children’s Trust on progress towards outcomes, the effectiveness of early help and any gaps in service. They also oversee and support the implementation of the work of the Early Help Stakeholder Performance group. This group is chaired by the divisional manager for Shropshire Community Health Trust, and vice chair is the Commissioning Service Manager for Early Help.

The **Early Help Stakeholder Performance** group, is a multi-agency group responsible for coordinating and evaluating auditing activity, performance outcomes and service user feedback. They monitor the quality of early help assessments through effective audit arrangements and develop quality standards. The work of this group is used to inform learning and workforce development.

The **Healthy Child Programme (HCP) Partnership Board** has been established in Shropshire to provide leadership to the HCP and to develop a strategic approach to the commissioning of health visiting, school nursing, early years education and children’s centres in Shropshire. Through effective strategic partnership working, the Board will maximise the delivery of the HCP, ensuring a comprehensive, cost-effective approach which is sensitive to local needs. Further Information on the HCP can be found on page 27.

The **Shropshire Safeguarding Children’s Board (SSCB)** is required to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of early help services and publish these findings in an annual report. The SSCB ensures that the threshold document is understood and used appropriately, and that early help professionals have access to effective supervision and training. The early help effectiveness report for 2014-2015 is on the early help website

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/1480064/Effectiveness-of-Early-Help-Apr-Dec-14->

[v1.1.pdf](#) The early help effectiveness report for 2015-2016 will be presented to the SSCB in Spring 2016.

## 7. Quality Assurance

Everyone who works in children's social care and wider children's services including early help has an important contribution to make to ensure we do the best we can for the children and families we work with.

A quality assurance framework supports services in delivering the aspirations we have in helping children and young people to have opportunities to do the best they can and for them to be protected from harm.

Shropshire Council's quality assurance framework, which includes the scope of early help, is based on a cycle of quality assurance activities in order for information to be routinely collected and used to improve services and in turn improve outcomes for children and young people. The framework works on a continuous programme of quality assurance activities throughout the year and includes gathering, analysing and interpreting information and feedback to stakeholders group.

Other methods of quality assurance include awards for the quality of the evidence based programmes we have implemented.

The Ofsted framework for children's centres; looks at the quality and effectiveness of early help as part of the inspection. The overall effectiveness of children's centres in Shropshire remains higher than the national average for children's centres inspected as groups with 83% judged as Good, compared with the national average of 52%. Inspectors found children's centres in Shropshire offer good early help to improve outcomes for young children and families, particularly for those families in greatest need of intervention and support.

In March 2015 the CANparent Quality Mark was awarded to Shropshire Council from the Department of Health for its 'Understanding Your Child' parenting programme. The CANparent Quality Mark is the only quality standard that has been developed for the parenting sector, by the parenting sector and is awarded to organisations who are developing or delivering quality universal parenting classes.

In September 2015 the UK Baby Friendly award was awarded to Shropshire Council. This award is based on a global accreditation programme from UNICEF and the World Health Organisation. Achieving this award demonstrates our commitment to improving standards of care to support breastfeeding and parent infant relationships.

## 8. Early Help Performance and Effectiveness

Early Help data is monitored and reported in terms of:

- Management information regarding Early Help activity (including at the “Front Door” of Compass) and targeted Early Help services activity
- Effectiveness (impact) and outcomes, including service user feedback and practitioner feedback

Performance is monitored through regular Children’s Services Strategy Performance meetings. The performance and effectiveness of commissioned Early Help services is reviewed through regular contract monitoring.

The Early Help Effectiveness (Impact Analysis) report is written annually and reviews the impact of Early Help for the previous year. This report is scrutinised annually by the Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board. The report informs an Early Help action plan which is overseen by the Children’s Trust Early Help Partnership Sub Group.

In reviewing effectiveness, any relevant research, policy or guidance is taken into account, for example the key findings of the Ofsted thematic inspection of Early Help 2015.

Early Help effectiveness is reviewed against the following key Early Help outcomes:

- Children, young people and families feel happier, healthier, safer, more valued, more accepted, more responsible for their actions, more positively engaged in their community and successful in achieving their goals.
- Families experience a positive family life
- Prevent the needs of children and young people from escalating to need specialist services (appropriate escalation and de-escalation)
- Children, young people and families have swift, appropriate access to the right help at the right time

These are currently being aligned to the Strengthening Families strategic goals of:

- Reduce incidents of offending, reoffending and anti-social behaviour through community cohesion and active citizenship
- Improving the life chances/readiness to participate of children and young people through the take up of education and engagement opportunities
- Keep children safe, ensuring they have a good level of development and fulfil their potential
- Improve partnership working and sharing information to identify children when they need help
- Reduce risk through effective/appropriate use of assessment and planning.
- Reduce the numbers of children being in need of a CP plan, LAC or suffering significant harm
- Reduce the impact of inequality

- Reduce benefit dependency
- Young people, adults and vulnerable people are ready for work whether engaged in training, work experience or other work related activity
- Respond robustly to Domestic Violence and Abuse by preventing incidents, protecting victims and dealing with perpetrators
- Improvement in mental health conditions in children, young people and their families
- Make healthy choices and reduce health inequalities by empowering local people to live healthy lifestyles
- Children start school healthy and ready to learn

The Shropshire Strengthening Families through Early Help Outcomes Plan will provide an area-wide set of success measures applicable to all families, from which the outcomes and measures relevant to each family may then be drawn. For example, if a family has a debt problem, domestic violence problem and is unemployed at the point of engagement, then relevant outcomes would be drawn from Shropshire Strengthening Families Outcomes Plan and form the goals against which significant and sustained progress would be judged for this family.

With such a wide range of agencies using Early Help there are challenges in ensuring an up-to-date, comprehensive, complete, accurate picture of Early Help activity is reportable. Another challenge is the availability of a resource to extract the information required from the IT system. With careful planning, the introduction of ECINs (and direct inputting) has the potential to resolve these challenges as far as possible.

Future plans for Early Help performance and effectiveness monitoring

- Development of and regular monitoring of the Early Help dashboard
- Align Early Help outcomes and reporting with Strengthening Families outcomes and reporting
- Ensure Strengthening Families through Early Help tools enable effective reporting on outcomes and impact
- Maximise opportunities for robust Early Help reporting within the ECINs system

## 9. Identifying children and families who would benefit from Early Help

Local agencies should have in place effective ways to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs for individual children and families. This requires all professionals, including those in universal services and those providing services to adults with children, to understand their role in identifying emerging problems and to share information with other professionals to support early identification and assessment.

Working Together 2015

The Ofsted thematic inspection, Early Help – Whose Responsibility (2015) found a wide range of professionals in universal services are identifying additional needs for children and families. The children concerned had a variety of needs that led to professionals from different disciplines working together to support them and their families.

In Shropshire we promote professional awareness in identifying the need for early help to any child or young person 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 showing signs of substance misuse
- is a pregnant teenager/young parent
- has indications or associations with those at risk of sexual exploitation
- is struggling with bereavement
- is at risk of school exclusion
- has low self-esteem
- has been the subject of a social work plan
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as
  - adult substance abuse
  - adult mental health
  - adult learning difficulties
  - domestic abuse
  - showing early signs of abuse and/or neglect
  - financial difficulties/debts
  - parents struggling to manage their child's behaviour
  - housing difficulties
  - poor attachment

Local agencies should have in place effective ways of identifying emerging problems, risks and unmet needs for children and families. This requires professionals to have an understanding of their role and identifying and understanding needs of vulnerable children and families.

Shropshire Council has undertaken a needs assessment to inform the Early Help Commissioning Project. The needs assessment seeks to provide an analysis of the nature and extent of the need for Early Help support across Shropshire (where possible on a locality basis) and as such inform the commissioning of early help services in the future. The needs assessment can be found on the early help website, along with the market assessment and the market position statement <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/early-help/market-position-statement/>

## 10. Thresholds

Working with families at the different threshold should not be seen as a process. Instead we will work with the family at the right threshold at the right time. Always at the lowest level possible offering early help whenever and for as long as it is safe to do.

[Accessing the Right Service at the Right Time](#) is the Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) multi agency guidance on threshold criteria. When thresholds are understood by all professionals and applied consistently this will ensure that the right help is given to the child at the right time and that services are commissioned effectively.

The majority of children in Shropshire who require services will receive them through universal provision in their local community. Universal services should actively promote key health and development messages and maximise opportunities to nurture proactive, supportive and resilient communities.

Infrastructure and workforce support and development in Shropshire has enabled many agencies and universal providers to train and have approaches for providing early help in universal provision.

Needs and potential risks should be identified at the earliest opportunity and support provided through universal services to counteract risk and prevent unmet need.

Where there are specific additional needs of a child or issues impacting on parental capacity, universal services may be able to take swift and helpful action within their setting or the community to meet these. It may be that a child or family would benefit from co-ordinated support from one or more agency.

Should risks and needs escalate, a referral for social work assessment should be made. Work has been undertaken to develop and provide letters outlining the outcome of a referral. This helps to provide the referrer with greater understanding of thresholds and to ensure the thresholds are consistently applied.

Regardless of whether early help is offered at a universal or more targeted level we are committed to Making Every Contact Count which aims to improve lifestyles and reduce health inequalities.

## 11. Information Sharing

Effective sharing of information between professionals and local agencies is essential for effective identification, assessment and service provision.

Early sharing of information is the key to providing effective early help where there are emerging problems. At the other end of the continuum, sharing information can be essential to put in place effective child protection services. Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) have shown how poor information sharing has contributed to the deaths or serious injuries of children.

Working Together 2015

Whole organisations approach and understanding of information and data sharing and agreed protocols are essential to good and effective practice. The Strengthening Families Programme has highlighted and stimulated a refreshed learning around information sharing and as a result we have developed an information sharing agreement signed up to by partners.

Findings from the Ofsted thematic review concluded that opportunities were being missed to provide early help services when needs were being identified, highlighting that information was not being shared to support the child or family. The review also discovered that information gathering through assessments was ineffective and that the information which was gathered, was not being used in support of the child and family.

Reflecting on these and our own findings, we are continuing to support practitioners to use their professional judgement when making decisions about what information to share. We support and acknowledge the work of Wilks 2014, that there needs to be a balance between maintaining the trust of people around sensitive information and sharing information to achieve better outcomes for vulnerable families. The document [Information Sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers \(2015\)](#) supports frontline practitioners, working in child or adult services, who have to make decisions about sharing personal information on a case by case basis. The advice includes the seven golden rules for sharing information effectively and can be used to supplement local guidance and encourage good practice in information sharing. This has been shared with practitioners.

We are committed to being open and honest with families from the outset as to why, what, how and with whom their personal information will be shared. We urge professionals to gain written consent when seeking consultation or making referrals by completing this consent form on the early help website <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/early-help/tools/>. We have also produced an information sheet for families to understand information sharing in more detail,



which can be found on the early help website:

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/1860209/SSF-Consent-leaflet-v3.pdf>

## 12. Compass – Shropshire’s Multi-Agency and Safeguarding Hub

The majority of children in Shropshire who require services will receive them through universal provision in their local community. Universal services should actively promote key health and development messages and maximise opportunities to nurture proactive, supportive and resilient communities.

Here in Shropshire we have a single point of referral for professionals and the public seeking advice or assistance with a concern for the welfare or protection of a child or young person. This is known as Compass - Shropshire’s Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. We have produced a leaflet explaining Compass, which can be found on the early help website: [Compass Leaflet](#)

The aims of Compass as detailed in our Operations Procedures are to:

- Co-locate safeguarding professionals who are able to contribute their expert skills and knowledge to share information, build up a holistic picture of the circumstances of a child and family and make good quality joint decisions.
- Make informed decisions in a timely way that provide the right intervention at the right time to protect and promote the child’s welfare and ensuring early help is offered when appropriate.
- Seek parental consent and engagement to share information unless to do so would place a child at risk of harm or hinder a criminal enquiry.
- Provide early help through information and targeted services at the first point of contact where it is safe to do so enabling families and communities to find supportive and sustainable solutions to meet their needs.
- Promote a shared understanding and compliance with the SSCB thresholds for intervention.
- Act in a timely and coordinated way when children are identified in need of protection including emergency protection.
- Provide parents, referrers and all partners with written rationale for decisions made.
- Deliver services against agreed standards and performance measures that will tell us if we are making a difference to the lives of children, young people and families.

Having one clear single entry point and simple pathways to access support reduces bureaucracy and ensures that responses are timely and efficient in obtaining an appropriate level of support for the child young person and their family.

The first point of contact within Shropshire Council's Customer Service Centre has trained staff, dedicated to dealing with enquiries about children services. Upon receiving a call they will discuss with the referrer some basic details of their concern to inform which service, either Early Help or Children's Social Work, is the most appropriate to receive the referral. This is then transferred to Compass.

Compass promotes the offer of early help to children and families in the first instance, where it is safe to do so, and also provides other professionals with support and guidance through consultation and advice.

Any professional who considers that a child needs help on a multi-agency basis should discuss this with a line manager or supervisor and a course of action should be agreed and documented. Managers may wish or be required by their agency's procedures to consult with a designated safeguarding person.

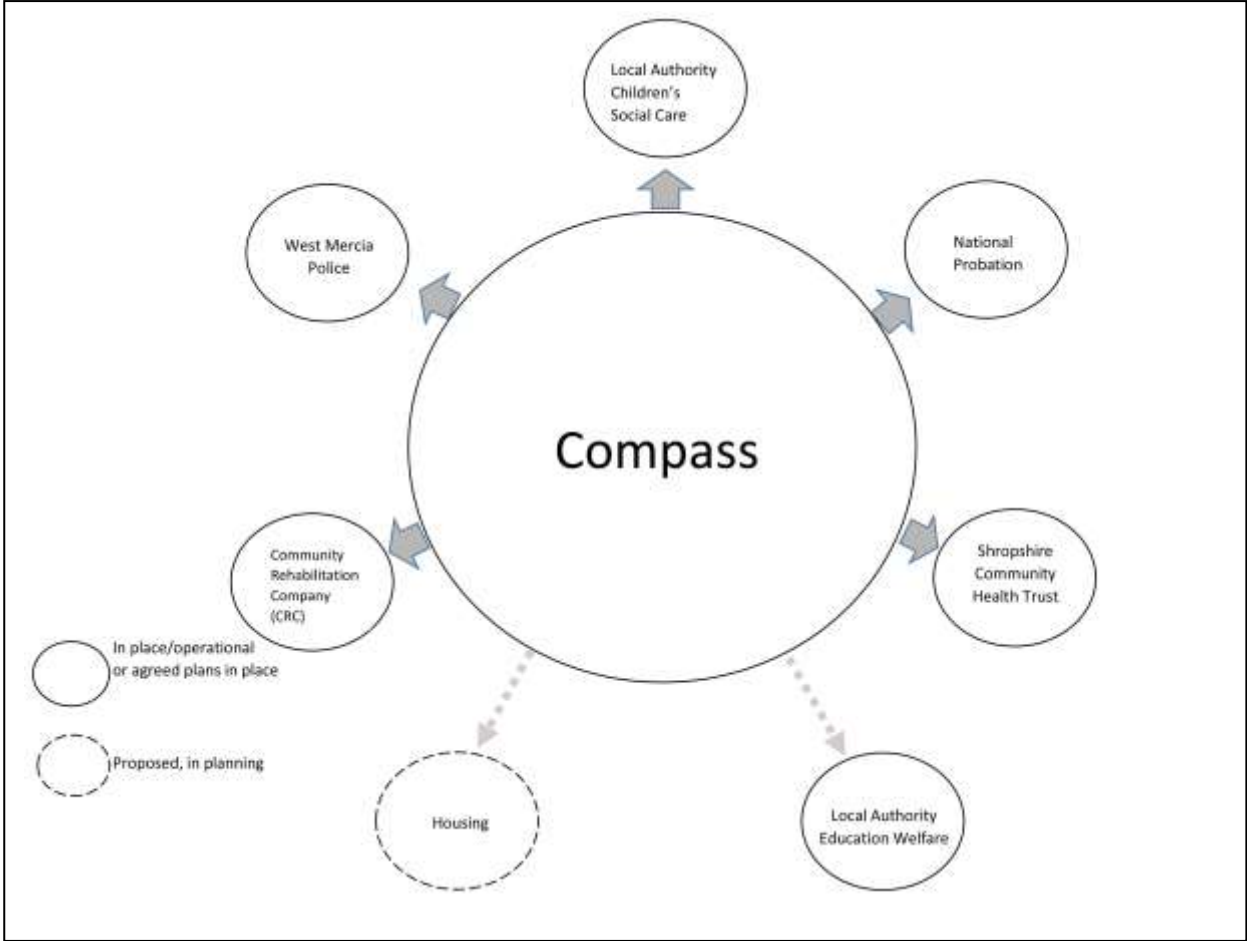
Consultations may be requested with an Early Help Social Worker who can provide support and assistance in assessment, planning and delivery of early help plans and specifically in the identification and management of risk through joint work with the lead professional. It is also possible to have a professional consultation with a Primary Mental Health Worker and a Targeted Youth Worker.

Parents and professionals can call for a consultation or book a date and time for a consultation which suits them by calling Compass on 0345 6789 021.

If any professional believes a child is at risk of significant harm, they must ring their concern through to the Compass on 0345 6789 021. They will take and record the information and pass to the initial contact team within Compass, where a Senior Social Worker will review the information alongside any known historical information. They will then consider what action to take, and let you know of the decision.

Compass ensures a timely, appropriate response to all requests for support and ensures that that expert advice is available at an early help level to all professionals and families.

The Compass team is made up of a range of agencies working together to respond to concerns regarding the welfare and safeguarding of children and are signed up to an operational agreement.



## 13. Assessment of need

Whatever legislation the child is assessed under, the purpose of the assessment is always:

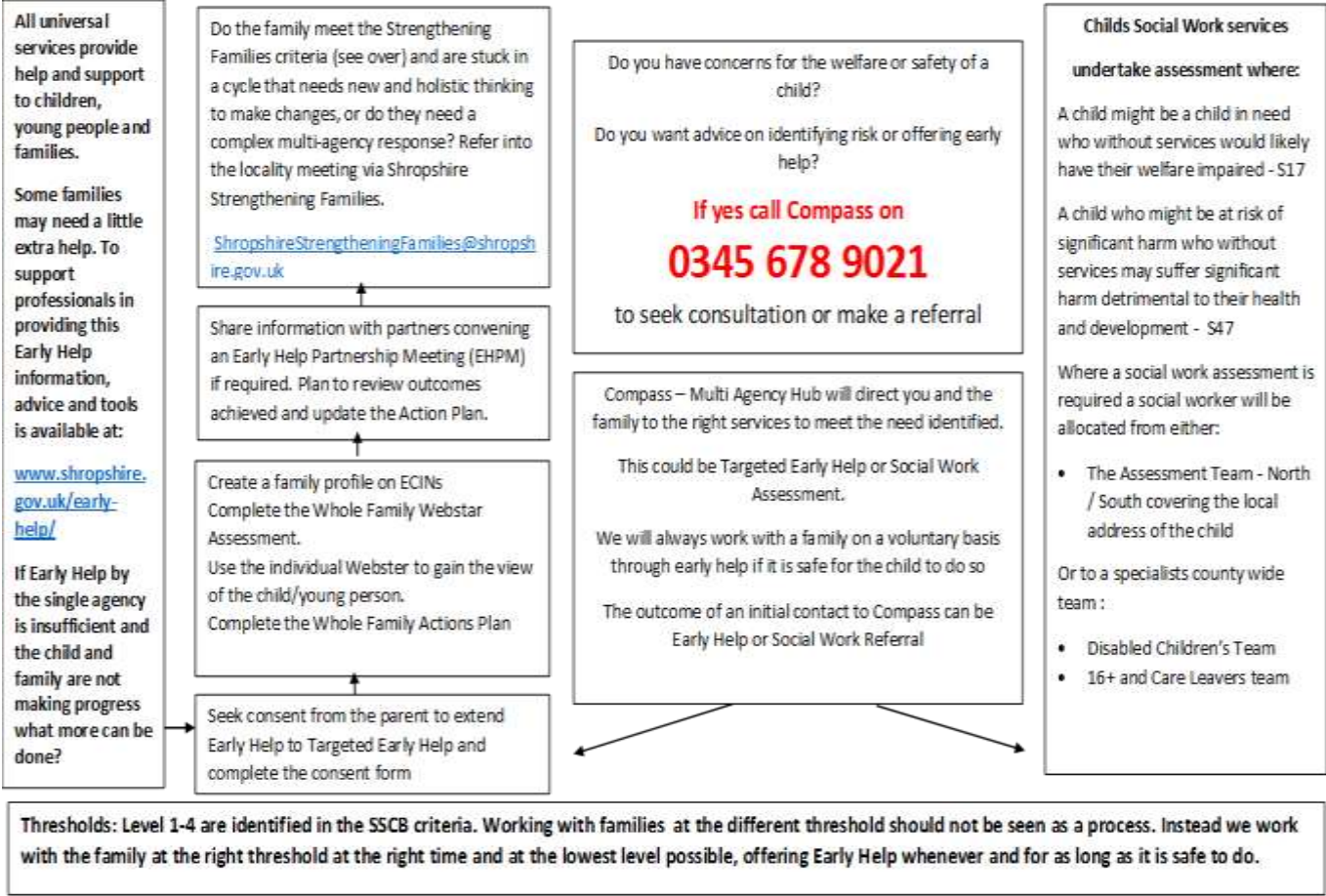
- to gather important information about a child and family;
- to analyse their needs and/or the nature and level of any risk and harm being suffered by the child;
- to decide whether the child is a child in need (section 17) and/or is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm (section 47); and 20
- to provide support to address those needs to improve the child's outcomes to make them safe.

Local agencies should work together to put processes in place for the effective assessment of the needs of individual children who may benefit from early help services.

Children and families may need support from a wide range of local agencies. Where a child and family would benefit from coordinated support from more than one agency (e.g. education, health, housing, police) there should be an inter-agency assessment. These early help assessments, such as the Common Assessment Framework, should identify what help the child and family require to prevent needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed via a statutory assessment under the Children Act 1989.

Working Together 2015

**Shropshire’s Pathway - Strengthening Families through Early Help and Protecting Children**



Assessment will be a dynamic process, which analyses and responds to the changing nature and level of need and/or risk faced by the child. Any provision identified as being necessary through the assessment process should, if the local authority decides to provide such services, be provided without delay. A good assessment will monitor and record the impact of any services delivered to the child and family and review the help being delivered. Whilst services may be delivered to a parent or carer, the assessment should be focused on the needs of the child and on the impact any services are having on the child.

As unmet needs are identified and services requested it is important that a shared overview of what support is needed, why and what the expected outcomes of this will be. This shared overview needs to include the family. Being the lead professional does not imply that this person does all the work and is singly accountable. It means they will ensure that early help partnerships are working together effectively and track progress. The role of the lead professional is to maintain this overview and track continuity of support and outcome along with the family.

The majority of children and families in Shropshire who require services will receive them through universal provision in their local community. Early Help in universal services should actively promote key health and development messages and maximise opportunities to nurture proactive, supportive and resilient communities working with families who are engaged. Using early help tools, information, and training and evidenced based programmes a single agency may provide the support or early intervention required to prevent needs escalating. This is common in Shropshire as an infrastructure of early help has provided resources and development over a number of years.

Where the single agency is not able to meet needs or progress is not being made further assessment work with consent and involvement of the family can bring together relevant agencies to review needs and progress and find solutions with the family. The importance of engaging and understanding the whole family is key for early intervention and building resilience and implementing change. If following an assessment, unmet needs have been identified which cannot be met by universal service or the partner identifying those needs, then a referral to an early help provider should be made for a targeted price of work. It maybe that a lead professional knows the most appropriate provider and can make the referral directly, but where it is not possible to identify a provider a consultation can be had with an early help social worker or TYS worker who will be able to advise. Prior to making a referral to CAMHS, a consultation must be had with a primary mental health worker to ensure the referral is appropriate.

**Contact with Compass can be used at any time for consultation or advice on identifying risk, offering early help or to raise concerns for the welfare or safety of a child.**

Where needs are relevant to the Strengthening Families criteria but multiple or complex and progress is stuck the use of locality multi-agency meetings is being implemented to take a more focused and holistic view of the problems. This may result in identification of gaps in provision or significant barriers to outcomes being met which can they be addressed through collaborative solutions and if necessary commissioning or procurement through Strengthening Families resources.

Referrals to Compass for early help services or where a social work assessment is identified as needed to be undertaken are followed up with communication via letter to the referrer outlining the outcome of a referral. This helps to provide the referrer with greater understanding of thresholds and to ensure the thresholds are consistently applied.

### **Step Down to Early Help**

Early help is part of the continuum of provision and support. Working with families at different thresholds should not be treated as a staged process where each and every threshold has to be applied in order to reach the next stage. Needs and support for children can step down to early

help following review and assessment of ongoing risk from a social work assessment, where has been a child in need plan, a child protection plan and including where some children may return home from local authority care with early help support.

Stepping down refers to the process of passing a family from an intensive or statutory led assessment or co-ordinated support plan to other more appropriate support services generally within universal, early help and targeted services. The social care team manager of the case will be in agreement that the case is ready to be stepped down.

The step down process will be led by a social worker with consent from the child and family. It is important that there is clear communication and good co-ordination that enables a new support plan to be agreed with the child and family and an effective handing over of the lead professional role. The role of the social worker in helping to outline how the concerns have been addressed and agreeing new outcomes is vital to a successful and sustainable new coordinated early help plan.

## 14. Assessment Tools

In Shropshire there are a range of tools to assist practitioners in assessing unmet needs and identifying what outcomes need to be achieved and how this will be done. These tools include:-

- My Life Supporting Tools
- Neglect Checklist
- Self Harm Toolkit
- Suicide Prevention Toolkit
- Child Sexual Exploitation Guidance
- Substance Misuse Toolkit
- The Autism Spectrum Gathering Tool

All tailored support pathways such as pregnant teenager/teenage parents/self-harm pathways should be entirely consistent with the model and pathways for the provision of early help and support, to avoid confusion and ensure a smooth effective 'journey' for the child or young person requiring support and their family.

The tools we have in Shropshire ensure that children, young people and their families participate in the decisions that affect their lives. They are a key source of information to understanding the issues they and their families have and it is vital that their voice should be heard throughout an assessment. The wishes and feelings of children and young people need to be taken into account when considering what services to provide and what actions to take.

At a family level, a whole family assessment means that an understanding of the complexity and interrelated nature of the issues faced by families can be developed. At the delivery level it ensures the right services are involved, that they have an accurate picture of the family's needs and that the same questions are not asked more than once. Whole family assessments provide the opportunity to bring together individual assessments to provide an overview of family strengths, risks, relationships and needs.

In Shropshire, following multi-agency consultation through locality meetings and a practitioner survey we recognised the value of the whole family approach. Suggestions made during consultation were considered when developing the new Family Webstar and assessment.

The areas for discussion within the Family Webstar align with the 6 criteria from the Troubled Families programme and include:

1. Offending behaviour
2. The community where you live
3. Are your children attending school regularly
4. Family and friendships
5. Parenting and your child/children's behaviour
6. Housing
7. Money and employment
8. Healthy relationships
9. Emotional and mental well being
10. Physical health

The key aim of the Family Webstar is to improve the way practitioners identify the needs of the whole family. This tool can be used as a starting point to begin a discussion with family members where there are early help needs emerging. An assessment does not need to be completed by one person, multiple practitioners can contribute to the Family Webstar.

The whole family action plan is about working with the family to identify goals, solutions and tasks to aid the identification of the right service at the right time.

The individual Webster can also be used by practitioners to further explore the needs of individual members of the family – either adults or children.

We are preparing for the roll out of E-CINS as a case management tool for our strengthening families through early help and child protection work. E-CINS will provide a vehicle to work in a joined up way with partners and share information securely. The tools we use will be integrated into E-CINS and assessments, plans and referrals can be shared appropriately. We will use E-CINS to manage and monitor the effectiveness of outcomes for children, young people and families.



From the findings in the March 2016 Effectiveness Report and the feedback received from consultation with practitioners, our early help tools will be reviewed. This review will simplify the tools, so that support and intervention can happen quickly. We will make sure that the tools are fit for purpose and not driven by process. The review of the tools will be concluded by the end of the summer term 2016.

Early Help tools and forms can be downloaded from the website:

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/early-help/early-help-forms/>

## 15. Workforce development and professional accountability

Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) should monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of training, including multi-agency training, for all professionals in the area.

Training should cover how to identify and respond early to the needs of all vulnerable children, including: unborn children; babies; older children; young carers; disabled children; and those who are in secure settings.

Working Together 2015

A strong culture of workforce learning and development will ensure all staff are able to develop the skills and confidence they need to do the job effectively.

Support and reflective learning provided by our early help social workers in the management of risk, analysis and professional decision making is key to our promoting and supporting a skilled and confident workforce to provide early help to families.

We will promote a strong culture in Shropshire through engagement for the early help workforce in the Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board multi agency learning and development opportunities. This will ensure theoretical knowledge, learning from serious case review and practice wisdom is shared, valued and used to inform practice.

A dedicated multi agency group leading on performance will undertake case audit, performance monitoring, service user and stakeholder feedback and this will contribute to learning and ongoing development.

- Staff members at all levels should have supervision, including reflective practice supervision

- A range of locally and nationally developed tools and resources is brought together in one accessible website [www.shropshire.gov.uk/early-help](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/early-help) to support practitioners in their direct work with families
- Timely key messages and updates are provided universally through subscription (via the website) to a Shropshire Early Help newsletter.
- Simple coordinated processes in Shropshire reduce bureaucracy and provide structure and support to staff throughout the process of identifying and assessing need, through to developing and implementing coordinated multi agency plans and ending support.

## 16. Locality delivery

To maximise the benefits of early help to families across Shropshire we aim to develop a locality approach to delivery that promotes accessibility and local need. Within this approach we want to support people in communities to take control of their own lives, and to live in a place where they feel happy and safe, and where they can feel a sense of pride and ownership.

The approach recognises that there are a considerable number of assets within a community – public and community buildings; land; public; voluntary and community organisations; finance; and people with skills and expertise. Working collaboratively to maximise the use of these assets will lead to better outcomes for individuals and communities. The strength of a locality approach is that it should be delivered by the community for the community, it should respond to local needs and it should build on concepts of community resilience and self-help.

We can apply this approach to supporting better outcomes for young people and families by to engaging professionals and the local community in developing a universal offer that best responds to local circumstances and to provide a gateway, into early help services at the earliest opportunity. Within this approach engagement of local community members and parents is essential to support a sustainable long term offer of support to those that need it and we will prioritise the development of community parents and community mentors.

The locality approach will be based on a detailed understanding of local need, future need and existing providers supported by strong stakeholder engagement throughout. Each community is different and while the principles of the approach will be the same, the solutions may differ. Since autumn 2015, all new social care work has been allocated based on geographical areas which are coterminous to the early help needs assessment areas. In order for social workers to carry out effective assessments, develop effective plans or step down to early help or universal services, it is important that there is good partnership working, knowledge of services and support and an understanding of the issues within communities. Working in localities offers the opportunity for partners to develop valuable, supportive relationships, which help lead

professionals to feel more confident in step down and achieving positive outcomes for children and families through early help.

The Early Help leadership team will be working alongside the Community Enablement Team to develop a locality way of working. For additional information on community enablement the team and can be contacted at [communityaction@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:communityaction@shropshire.gov.uk)

## 17. Strong and effective commissioning arrangements

Shropshire Council Financial Strategy 2015/16 – 2020/21 outlines the impact on service delivery of a sustainable business model. Ensuring the welfare, protection and safeguarding of all children and young people is a key priority of this Strategy. This includes services that provide targeted early help, preventing risk and needs from escalating into the need for social work assessment and child protection.

The Financial Strategy states “we will realign the Early Help provision across all service areas and, with our partner agencies, move forward in our commissioning of local early help. Whilst some commissioned services will be reduced we will identify efficiencies in the way services are delivered as a priority approach to achieving savings in this area”.

Currently early help contracts are funded through Children’s services budgets, Dedicated Schools Grant, Public Health and CCG contributions. These funding allocations are not consistently attributed to commissioning responsibilities, service priorities or outcome achievement through a funding formula, however the resources applied have delivered and been considered by Ofsted during this financial year as providing value for money in relation to the sufficiency of Children’s Centres and are subject to regular internal audit programme.

The LGA Peer Review (2015) commented on good evidence of early help provision activity; the early help partnerships based in communities across the county were considered to be an example of good multi agency cooperation at the early help stage and both Children’s Centres and schools were considered to be clearly committed to safeguarding with early help being particularly well supported by them.

There is no doubt of the importance of social value to commissioning of early help, particularly in relation to the social and economic elements. It is possible to secure social value through the proposed outcome framework for strengthening families and consideration to the wider benefits of early help will be key in future commissioning models.

Cost benefit analysis will need to be programmed into the business case for commissioning. This is particularly relevant to the nature of investment in prevention through early help. As early help in Shropshire is being mobilised to integrate within the Strengthening Families programme this provides a framework for calculating the impact of a consistent set of

outcomes to be achieved and monetising the benefits of early help for a range of services and commissioners. Inclusion of cost benefit analysis will need to take account of the time-frame for analysis and cost benefits to be realised thus potentially influencing the time frame for contracts to align with the Financial Strategy and Strengthening Families programme.

It may be considered the development and delivery of early help in Shropshire will be dependent on a more tactical approach to commissioning by further working with partners and stakeholders and realising the potential of funding from other sources.

We want to build on the collaborative approach seen through the early help provision and stakeholders working together. The intention being to develop a more integrated system of support, this will promote innovation and improve sustained and embedded outcomes for families in their communities this being reflected from the Shropshire Strengthening Families aims:

- providing relevant, timely support to families, some of whom will be included in the Troubled Families Programme
- working with families at the earliest stage to make positive changes and build their resilience, at the same time reducing the chance that they will need further support in the future
- providing more emphasis on allocating the right intervention to families with more complex needs and developing a shared responsibility to agree how this is delivered.

The objectives we are seeking to achieve in commissioning an integrated system of support as opposed to individual services are:

- ways of working that better reflect pathways for families,
- opportunities for innovation, flexibility and new designs for early help and
- improved outcomes for families from these new ways of working that are measurable and have cost benefit to commissioners and communities.

We need to develop these new systems in a co-operative manner that benefits from the experience and expertise of providers, families and other stakeholders.

We intend to work with organisations and stakeholders during the coming months to develop and refine the opportunities to provide early help in Shropshire, this will include taking every opportunity to maximise the value of funds available by aligning with other revenue provision and working with providers that are able to draw in funding from other sources.

Shropshire Children's Trust undertook a 'maturity' assessment through a short workshop session in the Autumn of 2015. This found early progress towards collaborative and joint commissioning across partners for early help and a basic level of commitment to and understanding of joint or collaborative funding for early help.

The commissioning and collaboration process is being driven through the Early Help Commissioning Project; this working group reports to Shropshire Children’s Trust and will be taking part and delivering a number of stakeholder events during Spring 2016 including working with Public Health, CCG and Education Commissioners to further develop and maximise the benefits of collaborative or joint commissioning. The early help market position statement will form the basis of future commissioning arrangements.

### 18. The Early Help Offer (The provision of Early Help services)

Local areas should have a range of effective, evidence-based services in place to address assessed needs early. The early help on offer should draw upon the local assessment of need and the latest evidence of the effectiveness of early help and early intervention programmes.

In addition to high quality support in universal services, specific local early help services will typically include family and parenting programmes, assistance with health issues and help for problems relating to drugs, alcohol and domestic violence. Services may also focus on improving family functioning and building the family’s own capability to solve problems; this should be done within a structured, evidence-based framework involving regular review to ensure that real progress is being made. Some of these services may be delivered to parents but should always be evaluated to demonstrate the impact they are having on the outcomes for the child.

Working Together 2015

The LGA Peer Review (2015) commented on good evidence of early help provision activity; the early help partnerships based in communities across the county were considered to be an example of good multi-agency co-operation at the early help stage and both children’s centres and schools were considered to be clearly committed to safeguarding with early help being particularly well supported by them.

There are a wide range of early help services available to children, young people and families in Shropshire, these include:

## Schools

Schools are an important element of the early help offer in Shropshire. They play a key role in not only recognising and identifying children and families who are vulnerable and who have a variety of additional needs, but they also deliver services and support to children, young people and families. This support and intervention may be delivered at a universal level or at a targeted level in school or in partnership with an outside agency.

A variety of models and levels of early help provision exists in schools with some schools commissioning or employing additional staff as family support workers and others using learning mentors to engage the wider family. Some schools work creatively in clusters sharing resources and work together in partnership with other services to deliver early help.

Having identified and assessed an early help need schools may:

Help to prevent needs arising further through:	Address unmet need through:	Working with outside agency in:
Universal Early Help	Targeted Early Help in Schools	Partnership through referral or consultation with Compass
<p>Understanding your Child/Teen courses and workshops</p> <p>Signposting to information or other services e.g. health visitor, school nurse</p> <p>Targeted Mental Health Support (TAMHS) whole school approach</p> <p>Personal, Social, Health, Education (PSHE including sexual exploitation Awareness</p>	<p>Understanding your Child/Teen courses and workshops</p> <p>Targeted Mental Health Support (TAMHS) intervention e.g. anger management, relaxation</p> <p>Family Support Worker</p> <p>Learning Mentor</p> <p>Parent Support Adviser</p> <p>PSHE specific support e.g. Empower programme</p> <p>Family Learning</p>	<p>Use of Early Help targeted and universal support in school with support from outside agency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted Youth Service (TYS)</li> <li>• EnHance</li> <li>• Children’s Centres</li> <li>• Early Help Social Workers</li> <li>• Lifelines</li> <li>• Young Carers Support</li> <li>• Employment Advisers</li> <li>• Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)</li> <li>• Education Access Service</li> <li>• CAMHS</li> </ul>

## Healthy Child Programme

The Healthy Child Programme is a framework for the delivery of a wide range of universal services for families from pregnancy to age 19 including maternity, health visiting, Family Nurse Partnership, school nurses and schools based programmes. Examples include:

- Healthy Start – a UK-wide government scheme available to low income pregnant women and families with children under 4 in receipt of benefits and tax credits and all pregnant under 18's
- The Start Well programme promotes healthy weaning and a healthy diet for 0-5 year olds.
- 'Help2Slim' adult weight management service is locally available; a local 'Fit Families' children & families weight management service is currently being developed with Shropshire School Nursing Service together with scoping with midwifery services for development of a local healthy pregnancy programme.
- Help2Quit Stop Smoking service is available to all residents in Shropshire including a dedicated service for pregnant women and their families.
- Shropshire's Eat Better Move More (EBMM) programme enhances the skills and knowledge of those working with or supporting young children and families.
- Shropshire's Active4Health programme provides information and support for local people who are looking to become more active and improve their overall health and wellbeing, including an online directory [www.healthyshropshire.co.uk](http://www.healthyshropshire.co.uk) to help people find appropriate and accredited exercise classes in their local community.
- Targeted Mental Health Support (TAMHS) is available for all Shropshire schools to participate in, to enable them to develop a whole school approach to emotional health and well-being. Schools are able to access an evidence based training programme and resources to equip them with skills and knowledge to develop effective interventions and projects in schools.
- Good practice based on 'Signature Strengths' and national self-harm guidance accompanied by skills and knowledge based training is available for all professionals working with children and young people.
- The Making Every Contact Count to all families will be expanded to support healthy lifestyle change through brief one to one discussions between frontline staff and parents
- The Shropshire Respect Yourself school programme provides schools with curriculum and home school partnership materials on issues such as Relationships and Sex Education, Eat Better and Move More.

**Health Visitors** offer universal services to all children under five years of age including an antenatal contact to all parents to be. Universal plus and partnership plus levels of intervention

occur when there are additional needs of the child or family. Involvement in the Early Help offer is recommended early when there are existing and underpinning health concerns.

Please click on the link for further information -

<http://www.shropscommunityhealth.nhs.uk/rte.asp?id=10033>

**School Nurses** offer universal services to all children over five years following the Healthy Child Programme including hearing screening at school entry and the national child measurement programme at reception and year 6. Universal plus and partnership plus levels of intervention occur when there are additional needs of the child or family. Involvement in the Early Help offer is recommended early when there are existing and underpinning health concerns. Please click on link for further information, School Nurse contact details and referral form -

<http://www.shropscommunityhealth.nhs.uk/rte.asp?id=10072>

### **Parenting Programmes**

In Shropshire, we recognise how important the role of parents and carers are and how difficult that role can be without the knowledge of appropriate strategies that can be used to deal with every day parenting challenges. The aim for all parents is to raise healthy, well-rounded children in a loving, stable environment and it is our hope that we can support parents, carers and communities to do this.

In Shropshire we offer 'Understanding Your Child' and 'Understanding Your Teen' parenting workshops and groups, based on the Solihull Approach. This offers a highly practical way of working with families within a robust theoretical structure. It is an early intervention model and can be used in a universal, Early Help and Targeted level on a 1:1 provision as well as group work. It has a major contribution to make to the ways in which practitioners in health, education, voluntary and social care can work with families to ensure that children have a good emotional start in life. In Shropshire professionals can access a 2 day Foundation Training in the Solihull Approach to support their direct work with families.

The 'Understanding Your Child/Teen' group is delivered over 10 weeks, 2 hours per week. The roll out of the Antenatal Solihull groups will be delivered over 5 weeks, by Midwives, Health Visitors and Children' Centres. These groups are intended for parents and carers who want to know more about sensitive and effective parenting. It aims to develop a framework of thinking about parent/child relationships, which can be developed in to a lifelong skill. This in turn promotes behaviour management.

The **parenting group** aims to:

- Promote understanding of children's behaviour within the context of developmental issues
- Promote the development of parent/child relationship
- Increase confidence and self-esteem in both parents and children



- Give parents a strategy for repair when things go wrong
- Promote reflective, sensitive and effective parenting.

The group has been designed to offer parenting support for families who want to learn more and who may or may not be experiencing some difficulties with their children. Although there is an established provision of universal groups, there is also provision for families who may be experiencing more complex challenges and require more targeted support. These targeted groups are delivered by professionals experienced in working with families with more complex levels of need.

### **Children Centres**

Children's centres are intended to be a 'one stop shop' for all children under five and their families and offer a wide range of both universal and targeted services within the community.

The services provide support for parents and help them to access:

- health services for children and their parents
- integrated childcare and early education
- information and advice about children's services, parenting support and a range of family support services
- training and advice so that parents are helped to gain skills and find work.

All the different organisations that offer these services through a children's centre work together to give the best support possible to all children and families in the community. These services are collectively known as Sure Start Children's Centres. Regulated by Ofsted, inspections check whether children's centres help families with young children to find out about and use the services they need.

Children's centres work with a variety of organisations including maternity services, health visitors, nurseries, pre-schools, schools, community enablement officers, benefits team, social care, voluntary and not-for-profit agencies to build on existing provision to develop responsive, needs led local services for families and their community.

Children's centres offer support to families in a number of ways. There is range of universal groups across Shropshire where families can get advice and support if requested or if needs are identified. Families may attend a targeted group e.g., to support families where there is domestic abuse, pregnancy related depression, a child with special educational needs or disabilities, a teenage parent etc. or a training course. The team also work with individual families, usually in their own homes, supporting the family to develop their action plan to meet their needs. Additionally, the service works with other agencies to signpost families to other appropriate services delivering both universal community support and the early help offer.

### **Targeted Mental Health Support (TAMHS)**

It is not uncommon for children and young people to experience emotional and mental health difficulties and so in Shropshire we have developed a programme to support professionals and volunteers develop their knowledge and skills to support them. This programme is delivered and supported by the TaMHS Team.

Supporting schools, professionals and volunteers promote children's emotional health and wellbeing and developing resilience is the core aim of the TaMHS programme which started as a pilot programme in 2009. The programme uses a universal population based approach & some targeted intervention support for children and young people

The programme adopts a whole service approach with the following key objectives:-

- Increase awareness of mental health/mental ill-health
- Develop a common language that expresses thoughts and feelings
- Promotion and development of strategies to support mental health, build confidence self- esteem and resilience
- Improve communication and consultation with specialist services such as CAMHS while also developing supportive relationships with key groups of professionals working with CYP
- Ensuring effective signposting to other agencies and resources to ensure a continuity of sharing best practice and learning.
- Support schools and settings to develop to achieve positive mental health outcomes
- Provide training and support for schools, professionals and volunteers to deliver targeted intervention support programmes to children and young people.
- Embedding the necessary pathways and supporting information into training sessions

Schools, professionals and volunteers across all settings are invited to attend centrally based multi-agency core training on issues such as self-harm, suicide prevention, loss and bereavement, anxiety, managing emotions, building self-esteem & relaxation. The training aims to increase the local workforce knowledge base enabling professionals and volunteers working with children and young people to recognise early signs and symptoms of need, provide practical examples of how to respond to the emotional needs of young people as well as tips and strategies on what to do and say following identification of need.

The more in-depth intervention based training provides resources and clearly structured programmes that can be delivered to support a wide range of emotional needs. All of the training programmes that are delivered are evidence based, either nationally or internationally and are supported by high quality resources.

This work is supported by multi agency collaborative working with input from educational psychologists, primary mental health workers, school nurses and targeted youth support. The ongoing development of skills and knowledge of our workforce through the TaMHS programme should ultimately reduce demand on Early Help increasing universal provision as well as enabling schools, professionals and volunteers develop confidence and a common approach to support children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing and support children with low level mental health issues.

### Family Information Service (FIS)



Shropshire Family Information Service provides detailed information, advice and support on all aspects of family life for parents and carers of children and young people aged 0-19, and those practitioners supporting them. They have developed a number of resource packs for some of the more typical enquires received from parents or practitioners. The packs contain information about local and national services and support, as well as resources aimed at children, young people and families.

The packs are:-

- Alcohol
- Anxiety and Worry in children
- Attention deficit hyperactivity
- Autism
- Bereavement
- Coping with a parent who has mental health needs
- Divorce and separation
- Internet safety
- Domestic violence
- Depression
- Sexual Behaviour
- Self-Harming
- Housing
- Parenting support
- Self esteem

- Sleep problems
- Supporting the needs of children and families by parental offending
- OCD
- Family Mediation
- Drugs

The FIS also has an online database of over 2000 local, regional and national services and support as well as things to do and places to go, which can be accessed here

[www.shropshirefamilyinfo.co.uk](http://www.shropshirefamilyinfo.co.uk)

### **Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service**

Since 2001 Shropshire's Fire and Rescue Service have been carrying out Home Fire Safety visits in its pledge in 'Putting Shropshire's Safety First'. The purpose of the visit is to ensure that parents are aware of potential hazards within the home and can take appropriate actions. The visit is not to judge lifestyle but to keep children, young people and families safe from fire. During the visit Fire Officers will talk about the main causes of fire in the home, test smoke alarm, discuss points to consider when making a home fire escape plan and give advice on the action to be taken in the event of a fire.

### **Shropshire Youth's Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)**

Shropshire Youth's Information, Advice, Guidance & Transition Service deliver independent, impartial guidance and engagement programmes to young people in schools, college and specialist settings to help them make realistic, informed and aspirational decisions about their future. Shropshire Youth IAG helps young people to achieve their potential by removing barriers to learning and employment, and supporting the reduction in the number of vulnerable young people in Shropshire not in education, employment or training (NEET). For further information on IAG in Shropshire call 01743 258850.

### **The Voluntary Community Sector Assembly (VCSA) and the VCS 0-25 Summit**

The Shropshire VCS Assembly was established to represent Shropshire's Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector. The VCS Assembly consists of a diverse range of groups and organisations bringing energy, ideas and resources together to provide a strong collective voice. The VCS Assembly understands the importance of working in partnership to achieve the best possible results for both the voluntary sector and the people of Shropshire. The VCS Assembly works closely with Shropshire Council and other public sector partners to represent the VCSE and influence decision making for the benefit of Shropshire as a whole.

The VCS Assembly is made up of 16 forums of interest. These forums bring VCSE organisations together around a common theme or sub sector. One of these forums focuses on the needs of

children and young people. The 0-25 VCS Summit (also known as the children and young people's summit) provides an important network for Shropshire not-for-profit organisations (including charities, voluntary and community organisations) delivering services to children, young people and their families.

The 0-25 VCS Summit meets regularly, providing opportunities for the VCS to engage in, and be involved with, the design and delivery of local services, projects and partnerships. Representatives from the 0-25 VCS Summit are involved in many strategic decision making forums including Shropshire Children's Trust and Shropshire's Safeguarding Children Board.

### **Early Help within the 'Local Offer' – Support for Children with Disabilities and SEN**

#### **Local Offer**

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Reforms following on from the Children and Families Act 2014 states that all local authorities must produce a Local Offer detailing all service provision that it knows, and expects, to be available to children, young people, and their families with SEND aged 0-25 years. This must include Health, Education, and Social Care. This must be published electronically and available to access via alternative methods to ensure accessibility to all those who wish to use it.

Shropshire's Local Offer aims to help families, children and young people, and professionals to support those with special educational needs or disabilities to find accurate and appropriate information. Our Local Offer should help families and their children and young people with an SEN or disability to make positive decisions about their lives, offering them a wider choice of services and information to access. The Local Offer is available on this website

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/local-offer/>

#### **Short Breaks for children with disabilities**

Our short breaks 'All In' programme offers a range of activities for children with disabilities to support the development of social, communication and independence skills, and to help increase confidence, concentration and improve relationships. Some of these short breaks are open to siblings, the whole family, or can offer a break for the parent carer while their child enjoys activities with others and is cared for by the activity leaders. These activities can form part of your child's 'preparation into adulthood' and can support their development and learning of independence skills.

#### **Autism West Midlands**

Autism West Midlands Shropshire service empowers families who have children on the autism spectrum. The service is free and accessible to anyone with concerns about their child.

Information and support is offered at the earliest opportunity and a diagnosis is not required. The outcomes include improved parenting skills and subsequent increased confidence and greater self-awareness, both for children and young people and their families.

Autism West Midlands also provide information and advice for professionals supporting this group of service users to equip them in achieve better outcomes with the family.

## **EnHance**

EnHance is an early help provision commissioned by Shropshire Council to provide early help interventions for children, young people and their families when their needs cannot be met by routine universal services, but they do not meet the threshold for a specialist service such as Children's Social Care or CAMHS. YSS Ltd are the lead organisation

EnHance has been developed to fully integrate into the overall Shropshire early help offer and aims to provide a flexible service, using a variety of interventions, to build resilience in children, young people aged 0 -19 and their families. The service offers a wide range of targeted and focused interventions that can be measured in terms of effectiveness, impact and outcomes. Most support is delivered on a one to one basis in the local community (including home visits), at flexible times, to meet identified needs. The work is carried out by keyworkers supported by trained volunteers. Group work and other methods of service delivery are also available where appropriate.

## **Parenting Practitioners**

Our Parenting Practitioners offer a targeted early intervention service, offering direct one to one support to parents in understanding and managing their children's behaviour. Referrals for a parenting practitioner are submitted via the Compass, using the Early Help referral process.

The Parenting Team also supports the provision of both universal and targeted 'Understanding Your Child' and 'Understanding Your Teen' groups and workshops.

## **Social Work Offer**

The Early Help Social Work team will provide consultation, advice and direct support to practitioners within the Early Help offer.

Although the Early Help Social Workers do not hold a case load, they will be available to advise and offer direct support to colleagues from all agencies. There are 6 full time equivalent Early Help Social Workers. These social workers offer consultation through Compass, in addition to working directly with our colleagues in the community.

Early Help Social workers can offer a range of supports including:

- Home visits with professionals
- Advice clinics in the locality areas
- Support the construction of Early Help Assessments
- Attend Early help Meetings to offer safeguarding and preventative advice
- Support Lead Professionals in the development and monitoring of targeted early help plans for children stepping down from Social Work plans
- Targeted consultations to practitioners dealing with more complex cases
- Supporting communities with creating their own support networks
- Bring forward and share with other practitioners the latest safeguarding tools and knowledge
- A telephone duty system (normal office hours), to respond to requests for consultation with an Early Help Social Worker

### **Family Group Conferencing**

In Shropshire the Family Group Conference (FGC) project, provides an independent service, using Family Rights accredited facilitators. FCG is used as a forum to bring family and significant others together to address issues and work towards goals identified by themselves and professionals. By addressing these in a trusting and transparent meeting, families can take responsibility for their own Family Plan and make decisions that will provide their children with the best possible outcomes.

In order for FGC to be an effective way of working in Early Help

- The child/young person and / or parent / adult with parental responsibility must consent to the process.
- There is a wider family network that is willing to engage and is able to provide the family with resources / support.
- The family has complex or multiple needs.

The Family Group Conference process can help:-

- Children and families feel listened to
- Families feel empowered
- Families take responsibility for the welfare of their children
- Families and professionals work in partnership
- Bring families closer together
- Children stay in the care of their family
- Identify support and resources for families
- Openness within the family

There are three stages of the FGC:

1. Information Sharing - all attendees meet together and professionals share why the meeting is taking place and what resources and support they can offer.
2. Private Family Time - the family have private time to discuss issues and generate their plan. The coordinator and referrer will be nearby if needed.
3. Agree the Plan - the family plan should be approved by the referrer as long as it is safe and legal.

At the time of writing Shropshire Council is exploring the introduction of awareness raising and training in the Spring of 2016 to equip early help practitioners to apply the principles of FGC at the earliest stage to engage the family and find early solutions, family capital and resilience.

### **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)**

CAMHS are a multidisciplinary community based service designed to meet the mental health needs of children 0-18 years of age, (including those with learning disability). They work with families with children and young people when there are serious concerns about aspects of their behaviour, emotions, development and disability. CAMHS offer consultation to practitioners through Compass, and also undertake assessments and interventions or treatments.

Shropshire Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group have recently launched a five year transformation plan detailing how they will use the new investment from government to improve mental health outcomes for children and young people. The joint Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin plan has 6 key programmes of work:-

Programme 1 : 0-25 Years Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service

Programme 2 : Redesign of neurodevelopmental assessment pathway

Programme 3 : Development programme for workers in universal services

Programme 4 : Community Eating Disorder Service

Programme 5 : All-age psychiatric liaison

Programme 6 : Perinatal Mental Health

Programme 3 has particular significance for early help and especially for workers in universal services. The development programme includes:

- improving the availability of training and advice on mental health and wellbeing for those working/volunteering with children and young people
- improving mental health support for schools and GPs
- increased availability of early help and targeted support to reduce incidence of self harm



- increased availability of early help and targeted support to reduce incidence of anxiety and other mental health issues experienced within universal services.

This programme will include the further extension and roll out of TAMHS training.

### **Targeted Youth Support (TYS)**

TYS is a specialist early intervention and prevention service for vulnerable young people aged 11-19, providing a range of support in order to help them gain the resilience and skills they need to progress into adult life. Targeted work may include

- child sexual exploitation and other risky behaviours,
- healthy relationships
- emotional resilience including suicide prevention and self-harm,
- homelessness prevention
- transition
- working with young people with autism and mild to moderate learning needs
- mediation and advocacy for young people i.e. between their parents or carers, education provision etc.
- Developing independence skills
- Substance misuse, working closely with the young people's substance misuse team

TYS works directly with young people, ensuring their voices are heard and understood by the adults in their lives, developing Early Help plans involving family members and other significant people to ensure that the progress made can be sustained by their wider support network beyond their Early Help involvement. This often includes direct working with parents and carers.

TYS will also deliver targeted group work programmes where need has been clearly identified. For example the Empower programme which promotes young women's understanding of healthy relationships, having been referred through the Child Sexual Exploitation panel.

### **Young Carers**

"Young Carers" are young people i.e. child or young persons who are 18 and under, whose life is in some way restricted or limited because of the need to take responsibility for the care of a person who is ill, has a disability, is experiencing mental distress or is effected by substance abuse. Young Carers' responsibilities may include organising life, help with medication, domestic chores, organising household, shopping, personal care, lifting, helping young members of the family, emotional support for the rest of the family and much more.

Shropshire Council has supported Young Carers in Shropshire by commissioning specific support since 2009. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 Shropshire Council has commissioned the charity Carers Trust

4All to continue to support young carers in Shropshire for a 12 month period. Carers Trust 4All is already commissioned by Shropshire Council to provide support for adult carers, which enables the potential for smooth transition between young carers and support for young adults who are carers.

The desired outcomes are that participating young carers should be able to enjoy “normal” social activities away from their caring responsibilities and learn coping strategies for dealing with their family circumstances making life better for them.

**Family Nurse Partnership** offer targeted interventions from early pregnancy up until the child is 2 years of age for to up to 100 families where the pregnant mother is nineteen years or under. The nature of the intensive visiting programme is evidenced to improve outcomes for both the parent and child and reduce the numbers and level of safeguarding concerns, specifically by addressing issues early and supporting early attachment.

The annual review from the FNP in Shropshire team, which was published in January 2016, included feedback highlighting areas where clients felt that FNP had benefited them. These included child development, relationships, better decision making, housing, benefits, and careers/education aspirations. Families are engaged in improving their own health and wellbeing. They are supported in recognising the early warning signs of problems and knowing how and when to seek help and additional support. Families are supported by local networks, families, friends and services in their local communities to help them in their day to day lives and at difficult times.

**April 2016**  
**Version 2.3**

## Appendices

**Shropshire Pathway Strengthening Families through Early Help and Protecting Children**

**Strengthening Families Criteria**

## Strengthening Families through Early Help and Protecting Children

All universal services provide help and support to children, young people and families.

Some families may need a little extra help. To support professionals in providing this Early Help information, advice and tools is available at:

[www.shropshire.gov.uk/early-help/](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/early-help/)

If Early Help by the single agency is insufficient and the child and family are not making progress what more can be done?

Do the family meet the Strengthening Families criteria (see over) and are stuck in a cycle that needs new and holistic thinking to make changes, or do they need a complex multi-agency response? Refer into the locality meeting via Shropshire Strengthening Families.

[ShropshireStrengtheningFamilies@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:ShropshireStrengtheningFamilies@shropshire.gov.uk)

Share information with partners convening an Early Help Partnership Meeting (EHPM) if required. Plan to review outcomes achieved and update the Action Plan.

Create a family profile on ECINs  
Complete the Whole Family Webstar Assessment.  
Use the individual Webster to gain the view of the child/young person.  
Complete the Whole Family Actions Plan

Seek consent from the parent to extend Early Help to Targeted Early Help and complete the consent form

Do you have concerns for the welfare or safety of a child?  
Do you want advice on identifying risk or offering early help?

**If yes call Compass on  
0345 678 9021**

to seek consultation or make a referral

Compass – Multi Agency Hub will direct you and the family to the right services to meet the need identified.

This could be Targeted Early Help or Social Work Assessment.

We will always work with a family on a voluntary basis through early help if it is safe for the child to do so

The outcome of an initial contact to Compass can be Early Help or Social Work Referral

### Childs Social Work services

#### undertake assessment where:

A child might be a child in need who without services would likely have their welfare impaired - S17

A child who might be at risk of significant harm who without services may suffer significant harm detrimental to their health and development - S47

Where a social work assessment is required a social worker will be allocated from either:

- The Assessment Team - North / South covering the local address of the child

Or to a specialists county wide team :

- Disabled Children's Team
- 16+ and Care Leavers team

**Thresholds: Level 1-4 are identified in the SSCB criteria. Working with families at the different threshold should not be seen as a process. Instead we work with the family at the right threshold at the right time and at the lowest level possible, offering Early Help whenever and for as long as it is safe to do.**

## Shropshire Strengthening Families through Early Help: Identifying Families.

