

SOMERSET EARLY HELP STRATEGY

Somerset Safeguarding
Children Partnership

Foreword

Our strategy brings together the Early Help principles, vision and actions of partner organisations across Somerset. This gives strategic direction to the whole system, so that we work well together to ensure families in Somerset get help at the right time, in the right place, with the right outcomes for them. We want everyone to experience early help which prevents their situations from escalating into statutory or emergency services, and which helps them to thrive, not just survive.

Early Help is a way of working, not a service. All organisations, services and people can deliver it, and everyone in Somerset can receive it, at any time or stage. We, the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership, have taken responsibility for ensuring the conditions are right for Early Help to be a way of working for everyone, but this work and this partnership is much wider than us. We will continue to challenge and develop early help through the Early Help Board and the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership, to ensure we are delivering the best we can.

Early Help is trying to avoid things getting really bad for people who are struggling to cope through a difficult time by helping for short periods

- Somerset Youth Parliament



Mike Prior

Superintendent
Avon & Somerset Police



Val Janson

**Director of Quality
and Nursing**
Somerset Clinical
Commissioning Group



Julian Wooster

Director of Children's Services
Somerset County Council

Our Vision

Early Help is a way of working, not a service, and it is **everyone's responsibility**; we want children, families, communities and agencies to **work together** so that families are assisted to help themselves and are supported as soon as a need arises, improving the overall **wellbeing and quality of life** of all Somerset children, young people and their families.

Together we will improve **participation** with families, **share information** effectively so that families tell their story only once, **increase partnership working** and **positive relationships** between organisations, and encourage **independence** and **resilience** in our communities.

This vision was created through detailed and extensive discussions with the Early Help Board, early help services across Somerset and children and young people from our participation groups.



a minority live in rural areas,
but face the most difficulty
in accessing help



Sydenham in Bridgwater
is the most deprived in
Somerset, with over half
of children there living in
income deprivation



5,000 to 10,000
young people in Somerset need additional help

2202

Early Help cases open
to SCC in 2019/20

Hospital admissions
self-harm for children
and young people:

624.4
per 100,000 in 2013/14



1002

per 100,000 in 2018/19



this is significantly higher
than the England average:

444

per 100,000 in 2018/19



1 in 3

pregnant women have
a social vulnerability

Somerset
0-17 Population (2019)

110,700



Families experiencing more abusive or
criminal issues tend to be tightly clustered
in Taunton, Bridgwater and Yeovil

206

of these cases
were children
with disabilities



19 Urban
Areas



20%

are within the
most deprived
areas in England

that's about
14,300
children



What is Early Help?

Early Help is important at all times: Even if a person is in crisis or requiring high levels of skilled intervention in one part of their life, early help can still be appropriate in other parts of their life, and both can happen at the same time.

Early Help means **providing support as soon as the problem emerges, at any point in the child's life from the foundation years through to the teenage years.**

- Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018

Early Help is stopping a problem before it happens, like putting a stop sign in the middle of the road

- Somerset Youth Parliament



[illegible]

We are partners in Early Help

This strategy is linked, and influenced by strategies across the county, unified by a single direction and purpose, but distinguished by a variety of actions and ideas which respond to local need and views:

To be among the best in the world, we need to put women, babies and their families at the centre of their care

Baroness Julia Cumberlege (Chair)
NHS National Maternity Review 2015

We know families achieve better outcomes if their needs are supported early. Access to universal services and positive interaction in families that spend time together creates opportunities for happy memories to be made and resilient capacities to be built

Somerset Children & Young Peoples Plan 19-22

Giving a better start in life for children

Fit For My Future.
A Healthier Somerset

Nurturing engagement and wellbeing = Helping people to be their best

Avon & Somerset Constabulary
Force Management Statement 2019

Our priority as a partnership is to ensure every child in Somerset is happy, healthy and prepared for adulthood

Improving Lives In Somerset
Somerset Health & Wellbeing Board 2019-28

The purpose is to support and enable local organisations and agencies to work together in a system where: **(1)** children are safeguarded and their welfare promoted **(2)** there is early identification and analysis of new safeguarding issues and emerging threats

Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018

There will be a renewed commitment to listen, and value, respond and use the experience of families to improve outcomes

SEND Written Statement of Action 2020

Our vision is a Somerset where young people feel a sense of belonging

Our Vision
Young Somerset

Early intervention avoids young people falling into crisis and avoids expensive and longer term interventions in childhood and adulthood

Somerset's Transformation Plan for CYP
Mental Health & Wellbeing, 2015-20

Early Help workforce

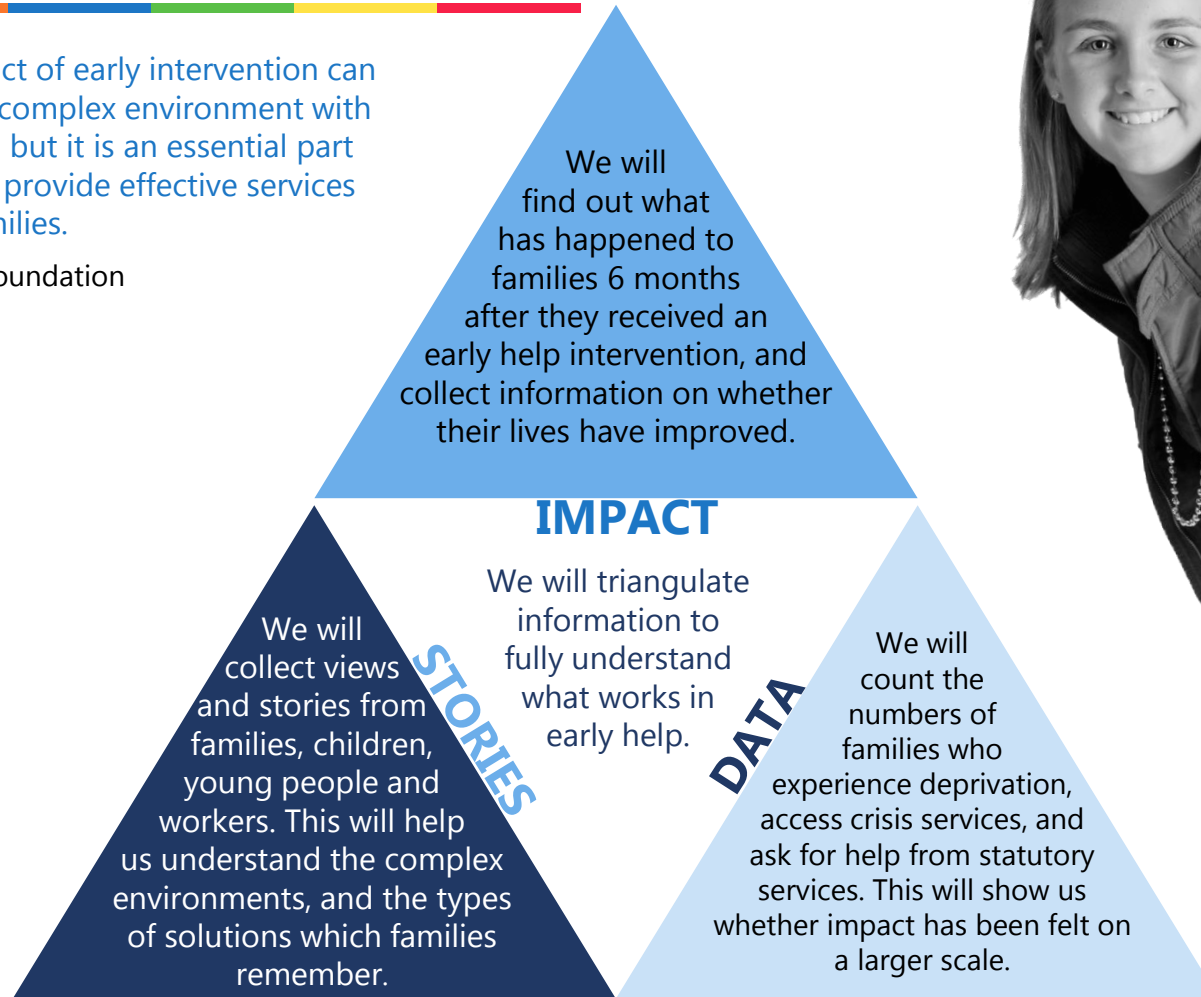
The early help workforce in Somerset is extensive and diverse, with many different organisations and individuals involved. Bringing people together and sharing information at the right time requires positive relationships and seamless technology. We know **early help skills can be taught**, and we will support the Early Help workforce to have the skills and confidence to deliver good quality early help and we will use technology to safely share information which means people can help more effectively.



Evaluating Early Help

Evaluating the impact of early intervention can be challenging in a complex environment with many moving parts, but it is an essential part of what it means to provide effective services for children and families.

- Early Intervention Foundation



Our Principles



Early help is a way of working, not a service

Any person working with a child, young person or family is able to deliver early help interventions.

Early Help is important at all times

Even if a person is in crisis or requiring high levels of skilled intervention in one part of their life, early help can still be appropriate in other parts of their life, and both can happen at the same time.

Early help is delivered in a range of ways

In a conversation, by listening, through training or demonstrating.

We will focus on the individuals needs, not the needs of the service

We will work towards making services fit the need, not the other way around, and ensure all areas of Somerset have equal access to early help support.

Community is key

We will support the community and community-led organisations to identify the right support for the people they know, enabling individuals to help others and help themselves.

Early Help skills can be taught

We will support the Early Help workforce to have the skills and confidence to deliver good quality early help.

Technology is a positive tool

We will use technology to safely share information which means people can help more effectively.

We will take a graduated response

We will always try the most proportionate, simplest solution first.

Children & Families



The way we want to do things:

"I only have to tell my story once, and my views and wishes are respected – I can see this in the plans professionals make, as they include my words, my information is shared between the professionals we work with, and they are all kept up to date through their systems.

I choose my Lead Professional and they will deal with the other services and professionals so that there isn't any confusion or overlap for me.

My relationships with professionals are really good - they know my strengths and help me use them.

I feel more resilient and connected to my family, friends and communities.

If I need more help, I know how to get it myself."

What has the Partnership achieved so far?

- We have developed a system called 'Transform' which brings together information about one family from different organisations. Professionals can see the whole 'story' for a family easily and can help to ensure the family are not overwhelmed with multiple services' interventions.
- The 'Think Family' Strategy has embedded a strengths-based approach in the council and with some partners
- The Early Help Guidance document ensures families receive a graduated response, and do not experience more intensive services than they need or want.
- Implementation of Family Safeguarding in children's social care; a new way of working with parents to improve difficulties with substance misuse, domestic abuse and mental health.
- Development of a new, multi-agency Family hub in Glastonbury Library.

What will the partnership do next?

- Ensure more early help organisations have access to, and contribute to, **Transform**, to ensure services can work seamlessly for the family.
- Explore a digitally supported way for families to **access their plan** across different organisations, view the outcomes they have chosen, and update or change these as they prefer.
- Work with the Board and partners to engage with and develop the statutory '**front door**' and the wider 'garden gate' .
- Develop technology solutions to improve identifying and sharing **EHA information**.
- Identify actions which impact on young people's transition into adult services.
- Include a focus on early help for unborn babies and potential parents.

How will we know we are delivering on our principles?

- Feedback from families shows they feel able to share their views and empowered to make their own choices. Families have decided what they want to achieve.

- Audits of casework show all the family's needs are understood individually and as a whole.
- Audits of casework show families who have accessed and changed their plan.
- Families report feeling more resilient and connected to their communities after an intervention.



Communities



The way we want to do things:

Families and communities design local services together.

Businesses in Somerset work with the partnership to make every contact count, including welcoming apprentices, creating safe spaces for young people, contributing to the environment and building connections to the community.

We work with residents to promote and develop community spaces.

We train and develop residents and communities to increase capacity to support themselves and others. Community organisations are connected to the formal and networked early help system and can navigate and contribute to it equally.

We know our local communities and are working in them positively, as they are integral to our early help system.

We know our community assets, groups and organisations.

We make information about this available through the Local Offer and other information routes

What has the partnership achieved so far?

- We have good ongoing relationships and are developing work with businesses to provide apprenticeships, particularly for disadvantaged young people.
- Multi agency working is taking place successfully in SHAPE Mendip.
- We are developing Neighbourhood areas, bringing together services around communities.

What will the partnership do next?

- Explore provision of training to the voluntary and community sector which enriches skills with families who have complex needs and helps build a community of support.
- Raise awareness of effective engagement and coproduction across the early help workforce (WSOA 1.1).
- Work with the Board and partners to engage with and develop the way families approach the statutory 'front door' and the wider 'garden gate'.
- Coproduce and redesign partnership structures between schools and multi-agency partners to create a solid foundation for joint working (WSOA 6.4).
- Identify links with developing Neighbourhoods work so that the early help network are able to contribute and join effectively.
- Create effective working links between the early help network, PFSAs, Team Around the School and other school support services.

How will we know we are delivering on our principles?

- Audits of individual services show how families and communities have designed and continue to develop those services.
- Training is available and delivered to residents and communities.
- The early help 'system' is tested and reported to be easy to navigate, both to community organisations and to more formal early help.
- Geographical gaps in early help are regularly identified for development.
- Communities report working positively and feeling connected to the Somerset early help system.



Workforce



The way we want to do things:

Everyone across Somerset's partnership understands early help and knows it is part of their role.

We have a shared culture and set of principles which bring us together.

Housing, education, health, social care, criminal justice, voluntary, community and faith sector workers practice whole family working and act as whole family workers when appropriate.

We know the quality of our early help practice and we support professionals to improve.

We are integrated with our partners in neighbourhoods wherever possible, and actively participate in Team Around the School approaches.

We share data so that each professional has a holistic view of the family.

What has the partnership achieved so far?

- We have implemented Family Safeguarding – a new way of working in social care which brings together children and adult practitioners across the Council, CCG, Somerset Foundation Trust and the voluntary sector.
- Open Mental Health is a partnership between a number of voluntary sector organisations delivering mental health interventions at an early stage, commissioned by the CCG and Somerset County Council.
- The Big Tent is a multi-agency collaboration led by Young Somerset, which has been commissioned by Somerset CCG to provide early mental health interventions with young people.
- We have started an Early Help Network of organisations focussed on early help with families, which will share good practice and training to support each other.
- The transfer of Specialist Public Health Nursing into the local authority created opportunities to work more closely with Public Health and Children and Young People's Services.

What will the partnership do next?

- Increase use of needs-led models such as iThrive and decrease use of tiered or threshold models, to focus services on type of need instead of severity of need.
- Review use of the Early Help Assessment and propose developments.
- Improve informal information sharing and knowledge about the early help system and network.
- Implement training programmes which increase the skills and confidence of the early help workforce in working with families who have complex needs.

How will we know we are delivering on our principles?

- The Early Help Strategy provides shared principles and is used and discussed in partners' forums to ensure a shared culture and approach is taken to early help.
- Evaluation of early help in each organisation shows effectiveness, learning and increased confidence in the workforce.
- Self-evaluation shows the extent to which whole-family working has been adopted by all partners.

- Team Around the School meetings are attended by a range of partner agencies.



Leaders



The way we want to do things:

Local leaders at all levels build productive relationships with partners and trust one another.

There is collective responsibility for improving outcomes, recognising that no one organisation delivers a specific outcome on their own.

Structures, governance and performance frameworks enable organisations to take collective responsibility, share risks and jointly invest in early help.

A board steers and coordinates the many programmes affecting the early help system and is a single point of contact for leaders.

Services are evaluated and evidence collated to show the local impact of early help, and return on investment.

There is partner-wide joint commissioning for the needs of the local area and neighbourhoods.

We jointly analyse need and outcome data to inform joint needs assessment and strategic decision making and predict which families need help.

Our early help work is coordinated and seen as interdependent.

What has the partnership achieved so far?

- Safeguarding Children's Partnership brings together leaders across three statutory agencies.
- The Early Help Board is chaired by a non-statutory partner and includes a wide range of partners from both statutory and non-statutory organisations.

What will the partnership do next?

- Create space for early help leaders and the early help workforce to openly discuss themes and focus on particular areas of early help.
- Ensure, and push for, collective responsibility for improving outcomes at the Early Help Board and in the Safeguarding Children's Partnership.
- Ensure the Early Help Board is an opportunity for connecting people and work, finding solutions to system-wide issues, prioritising areas of work, and being open and honest about progress.
- Strengthen our collective commitment to improving children, young people and families outcomes, evident in the strategy. Ensure these outcomes are visible and are monitored effectively by the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Early Help Board.

How will we know we are delivering on our principles?

- Successful delivery of the Early Help Strategy action plan.
- Improvements in the use and response to service user experiences.
- Improved audit and understanding of the effectiveness of early help, including gaps in provision across the county.



Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)

The way we want to do things:

Children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are able to access good quality early help, even when they may also receive more specialised services.

Early Help and specialist services are compatible, and can run alongside each other effectively.

Children and young people with SEND, and their families, feel able to communicate their views in a variety of ways, and know that they will be respected and valued.

These actions link to the joint Written Statement of Action (WSOA) which provides the Local Area with the opportunity to ensure that children and young people with SEND in Somerset have the same access and opportunities as their peers to high quality local education, health and social care provision so that they are able to achieve their aspirations to live healthy lives and maximise their full potential.

What has the Partnership achieved so far?

- We have redesigned guidance to ensure workers take a graduated response to interventions with families, ensuring families with SEND are treated fairly.
- We have launched a pilot app called 'MeeTwo', which provides peer support for young people experiencing mental health difficulties.
- Mental Health Trail Blazer projects have been launched in pilot areas supporting pupils with emotional health and wellbeing.
- A single point of contact for parents seeking SEND advice, support and guidance from the Local Authority has been established.
- Launch of training in the use of ELIM (Early Language Identification Measure) will provide further joint working across Early Years settings, Health Visiting and Integrated Therapy Services.

What will the partnership do next?

- Co-produce and re-design partnership structures between schools and multi-agency partners to create a solid foundation for joint working.
- Develop a shared (NHS & local authority) Somerset data dashboard that informs joint commissioning and includes detailed performance and experience measures for children and young people with SEND and those with EHCPs.
- Embed continuous quality improvement with a particular focus on the impact of leadership, management, and workforce development.
- Use feedback from children, young people and their families and services to develop the Local Offer platform.
- Develop a robust system so that children, young people and their families know how they can share their experiences and understand how this information is being used within the local area.

How will we know we are delivering on our principles?

- Number of children and young people, and Parent Carers reporting their views are listened to.

- A reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions, permanent exclusions, part-time timetables, formal complaints where pupil with SEND is a factor and persistent absence.
- Feedback from staff indicating that multi-agency work feels less fragmented.



Glossary of terms

CCG

Clinical Commissioning Group – the organisation which commissions NHS services in Somerset.

ETHA

Early Help Assessment – an assessment process which helps workers identify the best partners to work with, to meet a family's needs.

iThrive

Designing services around need, rather than diagnosis or severity. Describing services as 'getting advice, getting help, getting more help and getting risk support' instead of describing services as 'tier 1, tier 2' etc.

Lead Professional

When a family is working with a number of different workers from different agencies, it can be easier to nominate one of those workers to be the 'Lead Professional' to reduce the number of people the family has to engage with. This is also called the 'Key Worker' or 'Family Worker' in other areas.

MHCLG

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. A Government department, like the DfE (Department for Education) which provides leadership and direction for a number of local authority functions.

Transform

An online database which collates information from different agencies in a secure way, to support families and workers to succeed.

WSOA

Written Statement of Action. An action plan created by the local authority and the Department for Education which set out how we will improve SEND services for families in Somerset.



April 2021
Review date: April 2022

sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk

Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership 2021