

Early Help Strategy

2018-2020

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Signatories

Agency	Name and Title	Signature
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West Mercia Police	Supt. Tom Harding	
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1. Introduction

This document outlines the Early Help Strategy for how the partnership workforce will work together to support children, young people and families in Telford & Wrekin.

This strategy is an expression of our commitment to improving and developing the partnership offer for children and young people who need additional help.

What is early help?

Early Help is about identifying needs within families early, and proactively offering preventative support before the problems become more complex. Those coming into contact with families e.g. teachers, the Healthy Child Programme (health visitors and school nurses), childcare practitioners, the police, volunteers etc. all have a responsibility towards identifying emerging needs as early as possible. Support can be offered early in life or early after the emergence of a particular need which can arise at any point throughout childhood and adolescence. Early Help support is available for families and with children and young people aged 0-18 and up to 25 if they have a special educational need or disability.

Early Help is everyone's responsibility and it requires all those that come into contact with families to understand their role within Early Help. Furthermore, statutory guidance¹ highlights that Early Help requires agencies to work together in order to effectively identify families in need of Early Help support and provide the appropriate support if required. National research and evidence suggests that an early response is a more effective and efficient way of delivering services. It is better for families and services, to provide an intense, focussed intervention when problems first emerge, rather than delivering a more costly statutory intervention when the needs have escalated. This includes using targeted services to reduce or prevent specific problems from getting worse and becoming entrenched. By working in partnership to deliver an Early Help Offer we aim to reduce the demand upon specialist and higher tier services.

2. Our vision

We want Telford and Wrekin to be a place where families are helped at the earliest point, children and young people's life chances are improved and demand on crisis services is reduced.

At every stage of their life children and young people will be kept safe from harm and neglect.

3. Our principles

The partnership vision of Early Help will be built on the following principles which will shape the way in which all partners work together and by which all practitioners will deliver this work.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

1. Children and Families at the centre of what we do – Early Help Services are made up of staff who focus on the quality of relationships with, and the quality of life for, families, not just managing risk and reducing harm. It means constructive partnership working between organisations (including voluntary), schools, communities, children and families to provide personalised, integrated, whole family support and making every relationship and contact count.
2. Families and Communities can deliver earlier help – Early Help has the best chance of success where individuals and their families feel supported to find their own solutions to the issues facing them. This help often comes from within the family or community, and much earlier than help from statutory services. Families and communities are also better at finding personalised low cost solutions which are easier to sustain over time.
3. Tackling the causes not symptoms – sustainable positive change for children and their families depends on preventing and tackling the causes of problems rather than seeking to deal with the presenting symptoms. Support attempts to prevent the emergence, or worsening, of family challenges.
4. Early childhood help – help in the first five years of life is an investment that pays back for a lifetime and offers a chance to break intergeneration cycles of poor outcomes.
5. Not all help is equal – the measure of early help is the outcome, not the effort, and some interventions have more impact than others. This means investing in programmes which have an evidence base, or building an evidence base where none exists.
6. Ownership - the Lead Professional role is clear and robust and every family knows who their Lead Professional is.

4. Context

Why does early help matter?

“Every year, children across the UK fail to meet developmental milestones such as gaining a healthy weight and learning to speak, play and interact with their peers at an age appropriate level. Later down the line, some young people experience severe difficulties such as engaging in youth violence, developing mental health issues, being taken into care or being excluded from school.

There is clearly a need for early intervention. We know it is possible to make a difference for children and adolescents by preventing problems before they escalate and by enhancing their ability to navigate life’s challenges. We want every child to grow up into well-functioning, happy and healthy adults...

It is estimated that in England and Wales, we spend £17 billion per year on addressing damaging problems that affect children and young people such as mental health problems, going into care, dropping out of school, unemployment and youth crime. To

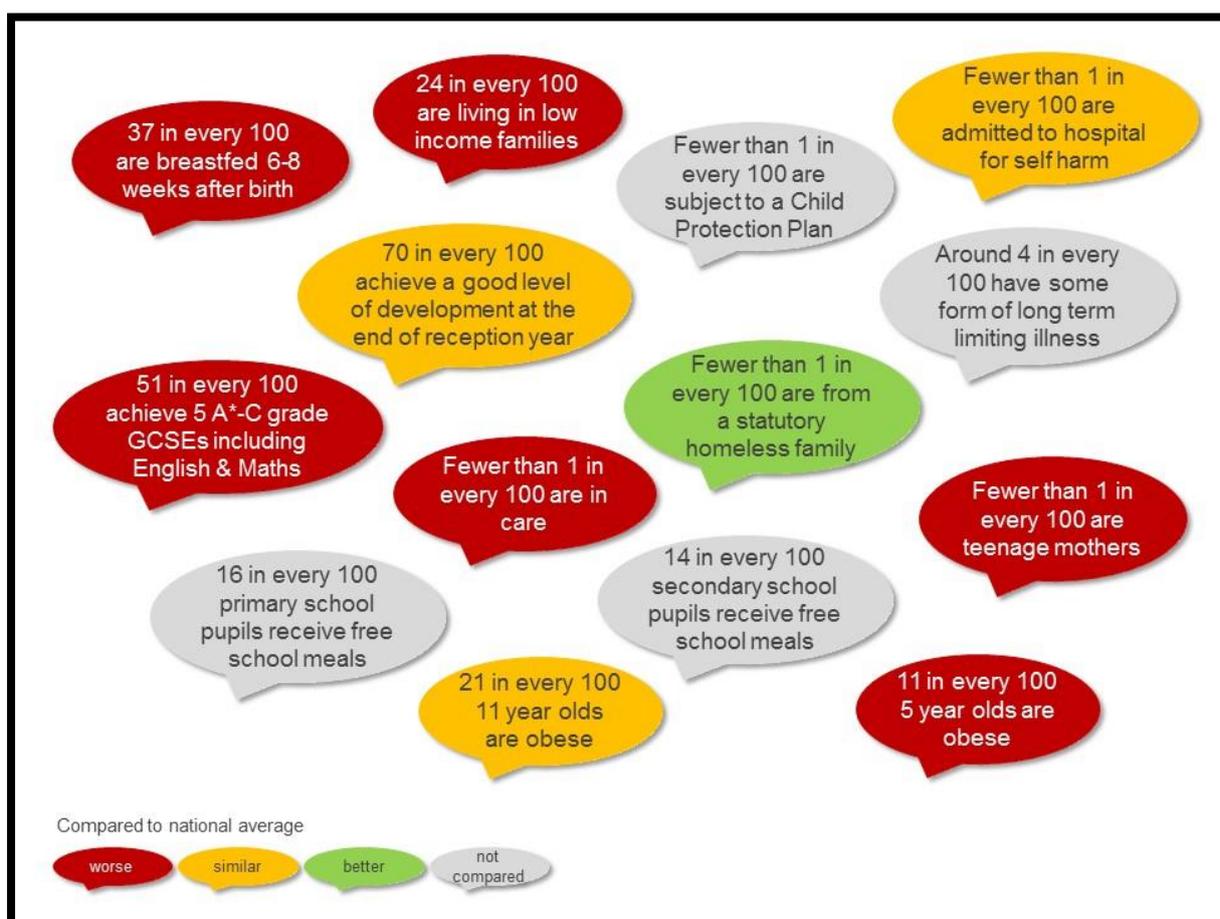
reduce this cost and prevent substantial suffering and wasted potential, early intervention is crucial.” [Early Intervention Foundation](#).

To ensure an effective provision of early help and support for families it is nationally recognised that a fundamental shift in public service delivery through joined up local services is required. This means working in a systemic, whole family way that recognises and deals with interconnected problems and histories. By working as a whole partnership to support families this should result in a reduction in the demand placed on costly high tier services. Evidence through the Department for Communities and Local Government’s ‘Troubled Families Programme’ shows that by working in partnership, families can achieve significant and sustained progress in dealing with their problems.

Why does it matter in Telford & Wrekin?

Key messages about the Population

If 100 children and young people lived in Telford and Wrekin as at March 2018:



Source: Research & Intelligence Team, Telford & Wrekin Council (March 2018)

5. The Telford and Wrekin Framework for Early Help

Those working with, and on behalf of, children, young people and families need to take responsibility for ensuring everything possible is done to prevent the

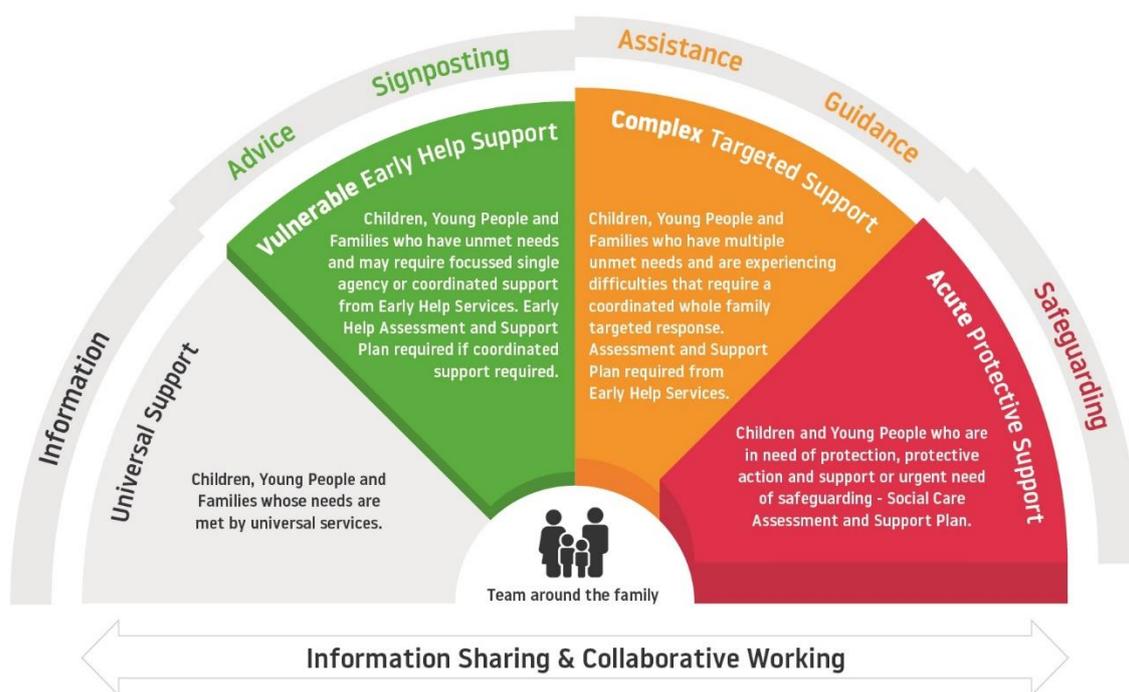
Early Help and Prevention is Everyone’s Responsibility

unnecessary escalation of issues or problems by delivering or seeking early intervention support to ensure the right response is given, by the right services, at the right time.

Working Together to Safeguard Children states that ultimately, effective safeguarding of children can only be achieved by putting children at the centre of the system and by every individual and agency playing their full part, working together to meet the needs of our most vulnerable children.

“Everyone who works with children – including teachers, GPs, nurses, midwives, health visitors, early years professionals, youth workers, police, Accident and Emergency staff, paediatricians, voluntary and community workers and social workers – has a responsibility for keeping them safe. No single professional can have a full picture of a child’s needs and circumstances and, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.”

The Telford and Wrekin Windscreen Continuum of Need and Intervention is similar to those found in other local authorities and provides a guide for the level of service a child/young person needs. The following diagram illustrates this continuum of need



Role of Universal Services

Many families in Telford and Wrekin thrive and do well; broadly these families engage well and benefit from universal services such as health care and education. They may also use leisure and play facilities, be engaged with community or voluntary sector services and have well developed social networks in place.

Effective, high quality universal services which facilitate easy access through universal services to targeted services offered at a locality level, is central to an effective early help approach which will reduce the need for specialist services. The Healthy Child Programme (0-19 years) is universal programme available to children, young people and families, it aims to ensure that each child gets the good start they need to lay the foundations of a healthy life. This is achieved at a universal level by offering specialist information advice and guidance with regard to key Public Health messages and health reviews.

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Children (APPGC) report “No Good Options” (March 2017) states that a “*failure to meet needs early is likely to result in those needs increasing. Consequently, when children do access support, they will typically require greater resources.*” The report recognised the significant impact of support at the earliest opportunity to prevent escalation of low level problems and the “*burden on other, often more costly services*”.

Role of Early Help

Evidence suggests that one of the effective ways to protect children from harm is through early intervention and prevention services. Professor Eileen Munro in her Review of Child Protection in England (2011) emphasises the importance of early intervention. By ensuring earlier identification and support we can help to prevent an escalation of concerns.

In addition, the current Working Together to Safeguard Children Guidance (2018) identifies the responsibility of agencies working together to promote early help and states that 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.

If issues are present in a family, and there are no corresponding protective factors, evidence shows that for many children and families long term outcomes are likely to be poor. Where protective factors are not being developed, families may require early help and support from more targeted services; these are our local early help services.

The critical features of an effective partnership early help offer are:

- A multi-disciplinary approach that brings a range of professional skills and expertise to bear through an Early Intervention approach;
- A relationship with a trusted Lead Professional who can engage the child and their family, and coordinate the support needed from other agencies;
- Practice that empowers families and helps them to develop the capacity to resolve their own problems a holistic approach that addresses children’s needs in the wider family context; and
- A simple, streamlined referral and assessment processes.

Role of Acute Services

Under Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 the Local Authority has as a responsibility to promote multi-agency cooperation to improve the welfare of children and keep children and young people safe from harm and neglect.

Children and young people at this level are in need of specialist services. They are a smaller group of children and young people who require intensive help and support to meet their needs.

The interface between Early Help and Acute Services is clear. For a child and their family to access Safeguarding services a statutory assessment is required. Before a child is referred to safeguarding services, professionals should, in most cases, ensure that the Early Help Offer has been accessed, including completion of an Early Help Assessment. If the initial attempts to improve the situation have been unsuccessful, consideration of the threshold for safeguarding intervention should be applied. Please refer to the Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board's Threshold for further information.

The Council's Children's Safeguarding Teams provide support for children and their families, where children have complex needs and where children are at risk of significant harm. They also provide support for children who need to be accommodated, or looked after by the local authority, through fostering or residential care and children who are placed for adoption.

The Healthy Child Programme

Please note the Healthy Child Programme spans across the Telford and Wrekin's threshold of need from universal to acute. The service is expected to deliver universal support to families whilst offering a graduated response to meet need from vulnerable to acute. The HCP Service encompasses the remodelling of the Health Visiting, School Nursing and Intensive evidence based support for vulnerable parents/carers into a model of integrated care across the life course from antenatal to 19 years. The universal reach of the Healthy Child Programme provides an invaluable opportunity from early in a child's life to identify families that are in need of additional support and children who are at risk of poor outcomes

7. Priorities

The overarching priority of this strategy is to work together to enable children and their families to achieve their best outcomes and remain together.

Key themes have emerged through our understanding of needs, current service provision, services' performance and the outcomes experienced by children and young people in the Borough. We have identified the following areas where we believe that Early Help will have the greatest impact on outcomes.

Our key priorities for 2018/19 are to:

- Develop emotional resilience and healthier lifestyles;
- Embed a partnership change in practice to addressing early help and measuring outcomes; and
- Maximise local community assets to deliver early help and reduce demand on specialist and high tier services.

Priority 1: Develop emotional resilience and healthier lifestyles	
<p>Why?</p> <p>We know that experiences in early childhood provide critical building blocks life. It is widely accepted that investment in the early years provides one of the greatest potentials to reduce health inequalities within a generation. National research identifies that good emotional resilience and wellbeing and healthier lifestyles are associated with a number of better outcomes for people of all ages, including reducing risky behaviours and improving educational achievement and employment.</p> <p>Locally, there have been notable improvements in a range of health outcomes in recent years. However, there remain certain areas where outcomes for local children, young people and families are persistently worse than average.</p> <p>There are clear health inequalities related to deprivation in our communities. Whilst levels of smoking in pregnancy are now falling, rates are still significantly high and there are lower than average levels of breastfeeding. Levels of self-harm and unintentional injuries in children under 15 are higher than average. The increasing rates of excess weight in both children and adults is a major concern, particularly as levels in children under 5 years have been rising.</p>	
<p><i>What difference will it make to children, young people and their families/carers?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More holistic service offer through the Health Child Programme; • Greater support offered in local communities; • More consistent, clear health and wellbeing messages across settings; • Improvement their lifestyle and health and wellbeing; and • Through improved personal resilience families should feel more engaged in improving their own health and wellbeing, with an awareness of the actions they can take to help themselves and their family to achieve their full potential. 	<p><i>What difference will it make to the partnership/agencies?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased confidence in delivering lifestyle and health and wellbeing messages; • Greater understanding of our local universal, prevention and healthy lifestyles offer and how to sign post effectively; • Increased opportunities for collaborative working on the prevention agenda; • More efficient and effective use of professionals and peers; and • Better use of resources.
<p><i>We will do this by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted work with partners (including schools) and communities to reduce childhood obesity; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-commissioning of the Healthy Child Programme, bringing together health visiting, school nursing and intensive support for vulnerable families services into a more holistic universal service offer for children and young people, the Healthy Child Programme aims to improve health and wellbeing outcomes and reduce inequalities for children, young people families by:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - working in partnership with partner agencies and communities to identify needs early - providing expert advice, guidance and support that is tailored to need - conducting health reviews to assess health needs and identify health related issues that require brief intervention, signposting, onward referrals or ongoing support 	

- Working with partners to deliver the NHS Local Maternity System (LMS) plan to transform local maternity services, through work streams for health & wellbeing (prevention), community-based maternity services and perinatal mental health;
- Continue to improve the Emotional Health and Wellbeing service for 0-25 year olds, which includes: early support and intervention, learning disabilities, the neuro development service, as well as the specialist mental health service;
- Continue to develop prevention programmes with schools, through the:
 - Future in Mind Programme for emotional health and wellbeing, extension to cover Relationship and Sex Education, diet and physical activity,
 - Community Safety Partnership schools projects, e.g. Crucial Crew and Look Out Life;
- Continued expansion of Making Every Contact Count training;
- Strengthening the health improvement role of child and family settings;
- Continuing to work with the voluntary sector and communities to seek grant funding to enable them to deliver some preventative services; and
- Implementation of action plans for suicide prevention and unintentional injury.

We will know we have achieved this by:

Improved outcomes for maternal health, infants, children and young people, including:

- Reduction in maternal obesity, smoking in pregnancy and perinatal mental health problems;
- Increase in breastfeeding and uptake of the Healthy Start Scheme;
- Decrease in excess weight and improvement in physical activity levels;
- Continued reduction in smoking and levels of alcohol and drug misuse; and
- Improvement in levels of emotional health and wellbeing and mental health.

Priority 2: Embed a partnership change in practice to addressing early help and measuring outcomes

Why?

National research and evidence shows that effective identification leads to the appropriate level of intervention to prevent escalation of need.

Telford and Wrekin have embarked upon a change programme that will revise the current partnership model of Common Assessment and Team Around the Child. The new approach is designed to “Think Family” and embrace the Strengthening Families principle into integrated working practice across all stakeholders working with Children and Families.

The new evidence based Early Help Assessment and Family Support Plan is underpinned by the “signs of safety” systemic approach². It aims to work collaboratively and in partnership with families and children, and produce action plans for increasing safety and reducing risk and danger by focusing on strengths, resources and networks that the family have.

The new model will be adopted to provide efficiency and effectiveness of partnership working that will capture performance data demonstrating the impact made by services supporting families and the outcomes that those families have been achieved.

² signs of safety is a strength based interview technique, and draws upon techniques from Solution Focused Brief therapy (SFBT)

<p>What difference will it make to children, young people and their families/carers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The families’ needs and circumstances are captured in one assessment. • Children, and their families, are a partners in the work to improve their life. • Children and Families will be clearer about what is expected of them and they receive more relevant support • Children are confident in sharing their views and feelings with those working with them. • If families feel they have concerns or issues, they will be supported and encouraged to seek additional help if necessary. 	<p>What difference will it make to the partnership/agencies?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lead professional has access to all the information that is relevant to provide support to the family. • Common approach, practice and understanding across the partnership and better presentation of evidence • Professionals will specific about their concerns for the child’s safety and be transparent with their decision-making • Acknowledgement of strengths in family network and community support. • Focus on how to achieve safety and de-escalate further concerns where it is safe to do so. • Provides a measure of progress achieved and an aid to assist where continued level of support is needed.
<p>We will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing a new partnership Early Help Assessment (EHA) and Family Support Plan; • Utilise analytical information to build and shape Early Help Services; • Develop and deliver an appropriate workforce plan to support practitioners in using the new EHA and to understand their roles and responsibilities in delivering the Early Help Strategy; and • Review and update the Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board’s Threshold Document to reflect the changes in early help practice. 	
<p>We will know we have achieved this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By the end of 2019/2020 to have achieved 100% significant and sustained progress. • The lead professional is clearly able to work across services to deliver support that is needed for the family – the service the family get is no longer dependent on which agency provides it. • The family are able to “<i>own their own road to change</i>” and are positive about the future; • Families are able to demonstrate their progress, in their own opinion, via the Family Circle tool and family views are captured within the ICT Case Management system; • Case file audits demonstrate partnership responses that have delivered positive outcomes, supported by data and information sharing; • Joined up and collaborative information gathering is in place, with paperless process which are suited to a mobile workforce; • Services are provided to families by knowledgeable and well trained staff who have access to data systems and use data to meet service needs; and • Early Help Services use evidence-based research to plan strategically and develop a roadmap to drive continuous improvements across the Early Hep Services. 	

Priority 3: Maximise local community assets to deliver early help and reduce demand on specialist and high tier services

<p>Why?</p> <p>Asset-based approaches have become increasingly popular in increasing the resilience of individuals, and communities.</p> <p>They are characterised by strategies which begin by looking at the resources which are immediately available, building 'up' from the strengths of an individual or community to engender self-sufficiency.</p>	
<p>What difference will it make to children, young people and their families/carers?</p> <p>Peer modeling behaviors that will help individuals to cope with social or emotional barriers and to stay motivated to reach their own goals, builds on trust and respectful relationships and learning through shared experience.</p>	<p>What difference will it make to the partnership/agencies?</p> <p>An assets-based approach will build capacity in service provision to support children and families.</p>
<p>We will do this by:</p> <p>Working with partner organisations, individuals and community groups wherever possible to seek an alternative delivery model for Children's Centre Services (CCS). We have been successful in some activities being delivered by Parish Councils and Charity Organisations. The focus on the Local Authority Early Help Teams who oversee the responsibility of this area is to continue to provide group support, family support and opportunities to build robust peer led provision to maximise community assets.</p> <p>Develop new initiatives to deliver the earliest possible help and reduce demand on specialist and high cost services. A new service has been developed and implemented, the new Family Solutions team supports the service priority of reducing the numbers of children in our care, where it is safe to do so. This team has been making good progress, and the partnership working required to deliver such achievements is positive.</p> <p>Re-commissioning of the Healthy Child Programme, the programme will have an asset based approach to tackle the root causes of health and wellbeing needs. It will also contribute to building community capacity and community assets. The Service shall be pivotal in supporting families to integrate and engage with the community they live within whilst also empowering parent led community groups / support networks - recognising the protective factors that exist within communities.</p>	
<p>We will know we have achieved this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Participation team measures (future) • All children centre activities will be led by alternative providers with many peer led activities to build capacity and sustain as strong delivery model. 	

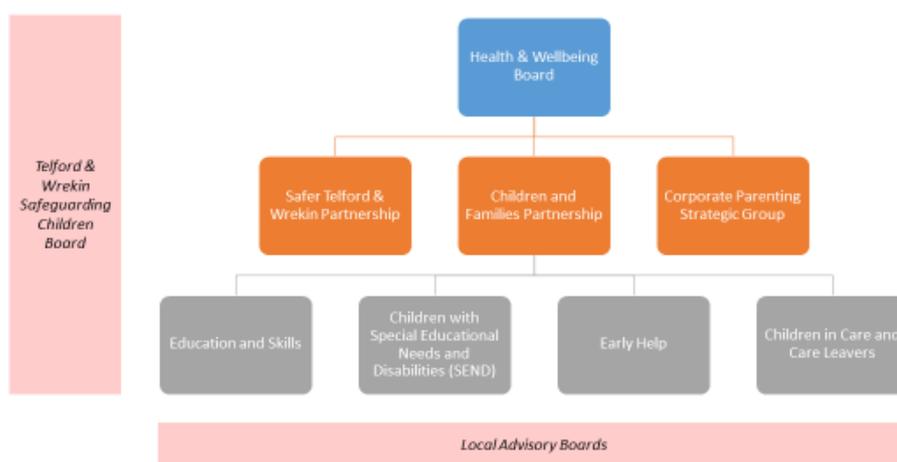
8. Governance and Accountability

The delivery of the Early Help Strategy will be overseen by the Children & Families Partnership (CFP). The CFP will receive regular updates on the progress of implementing the strategy and any areas of challenge to this.

Telford and Wrekin Early Help Partnership Strategy 2018-2020

The CFP is accountable locally to the Health and Wellbeing Board and provides an annual update on its progress as well as updates on specific aspects, such as mental health throughout the year. These updates will also include an update on the implementation of the Early Help Strategy.

The CFP is linked with other strategic local and regional partnerships as the following diagram illustrates.



As well as these strategic links, the partnership works closely with the wider partnership landscape in the Borough to ensure that strategies and work plans are aligned (e.g. the Safeguarding Children Board and the Safer Telford and Wrekin Partnership).

9. Looking Forward

There has been lots of positive work already and we need to build on what is working well already in communities, districts and across the Borough to improve Early Help. We need to maintain the momentum built through the joint development of this strategy so collectively we realise the benefits of Early Help for children, young people and families. Making the strategy a reality will require planning and action, supported by robust delivery plans that are owned and delivered at both a local and county level.

We will measure our success by the impact that this has on the lives of children, young people and families.

10. References

Department for Communities and Local Government, Early Help Service Transformation Maturity Model, December 2017.

Department for Communities and Local Government, Data Maturity Model for Early Help Services, December 2017.

All Party Parliamentary Group for Children (APPGC) report “No Good Options”, March 2017.

Working together to Safeguard Children – July 2018

www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

Children and Social Work Act 2017

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/contents/enacted