

Early Help Strategy

(2022 - 2025)



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FOREWORD

I am pleased to present Doncaster's Early Help strategy which outlines our joint approach to responding to the needs of children, young people and families in Doncaster in 2022 - 2025.



This strategy continues the progress already made in developing a strong and resilient Early Help model through our current strategy. Early Help is not a service or an agency it is a way of doing things to ensure families receive the right help in the right place at the right time, whether that is advice, information and guidance or more structured support.

We want all families, whatever their circumstances to know that they can seek out support. The ethos of the strategy is to ensure that everyone is getting the right support at the right time. We want to provide a holistic approach to families, be embedded within our communities and be accessible.

There is a great deal of evidence that shows good Early Help is effective in preventing families moving into crises and needing statutory support services, and this strategy focusses on doing just that. It sets out a vision, a set of values, key priorities and what will be done to achieve them, building on what we do well and where we need to make some improvements.

I am committed to championing Early Help and this strategy and am excited to see the progress we can make together in delivering it.

Lani-Mae Ball

Lani-Mae Ball
Portfolio Lead for Education, Skills & Young People

WHAT IS EARLY HELP?

Early Help is not a service but a way of thinking and working. It is a collaborative approach between services with families that provides support as soon as a need is identified.



Early Help is focused on prevention, early intervention, and the provision of support for families to prevent or reduce the need for statutory services. There are also examples in which it can prevent further challenges arising, for example if Early Help is provided as part of a support plan when a child or young person has returned home from a period of care or protection under Children's Social Care.

By working with families to identify their strengths, Early Help is focused on building resilience and creating sustainable change that enables families to overcome any future challenges.

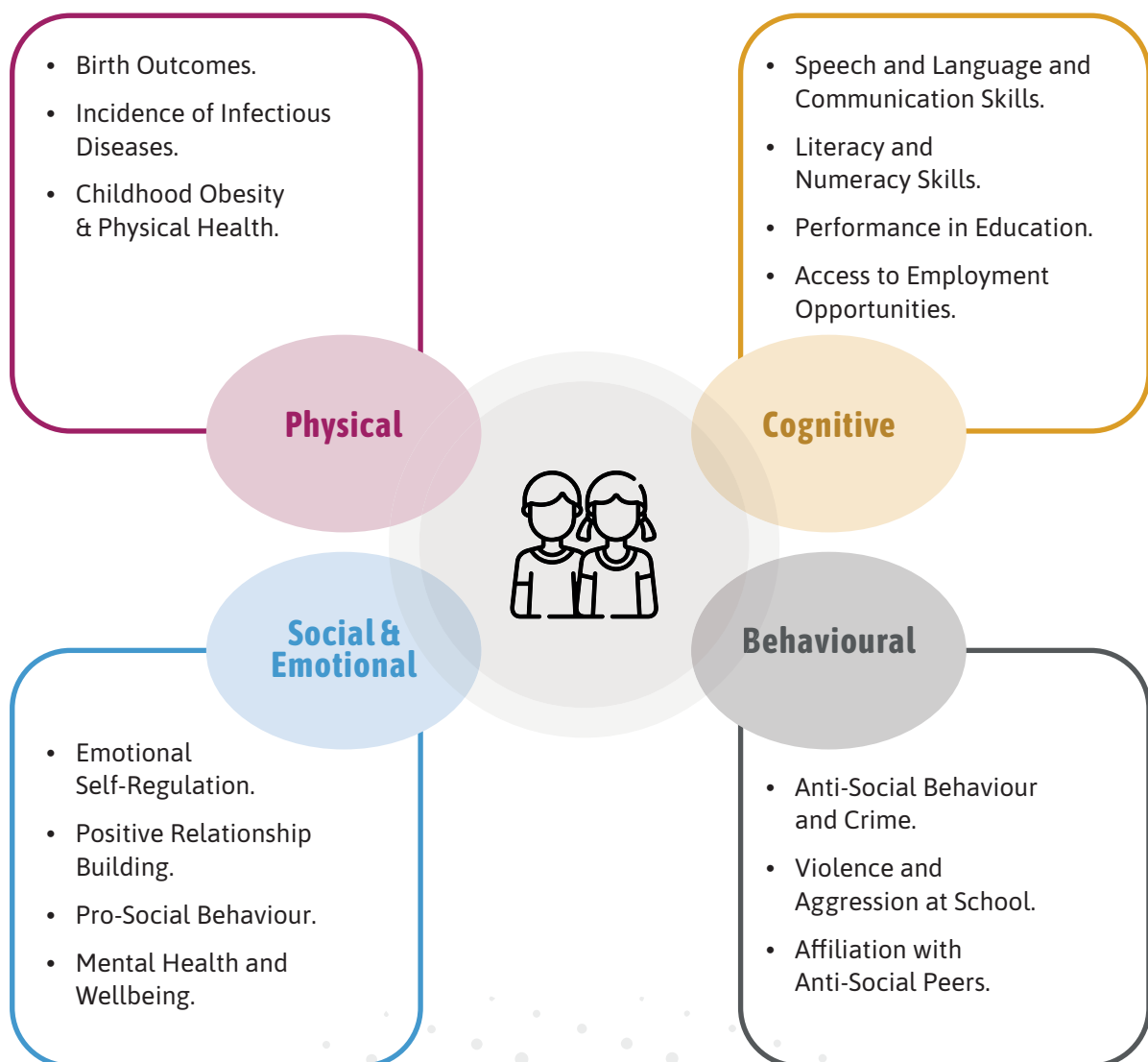
The Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 document outlines the key benefit of having an effective Early Help strategy as being that it is far more effective to be proactive and promote the welfare of children than to be faced with the need to implement reactive measures.

The video below provides a helpful summary of Early Help. It can also be accessed via the link or QR code below: www.dscp.org.uk/professionals/early-help



EARLY INTERVENTION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Good child development is important for ensuring our children have the best chance at reaching their potential. Early Help plays a crucial role in supporting all elements of child development. The diagram below outlines the four areas of child development.



WHOLE FAMILY WORKING

We want Doncaster to have thriving children, young people, and families.

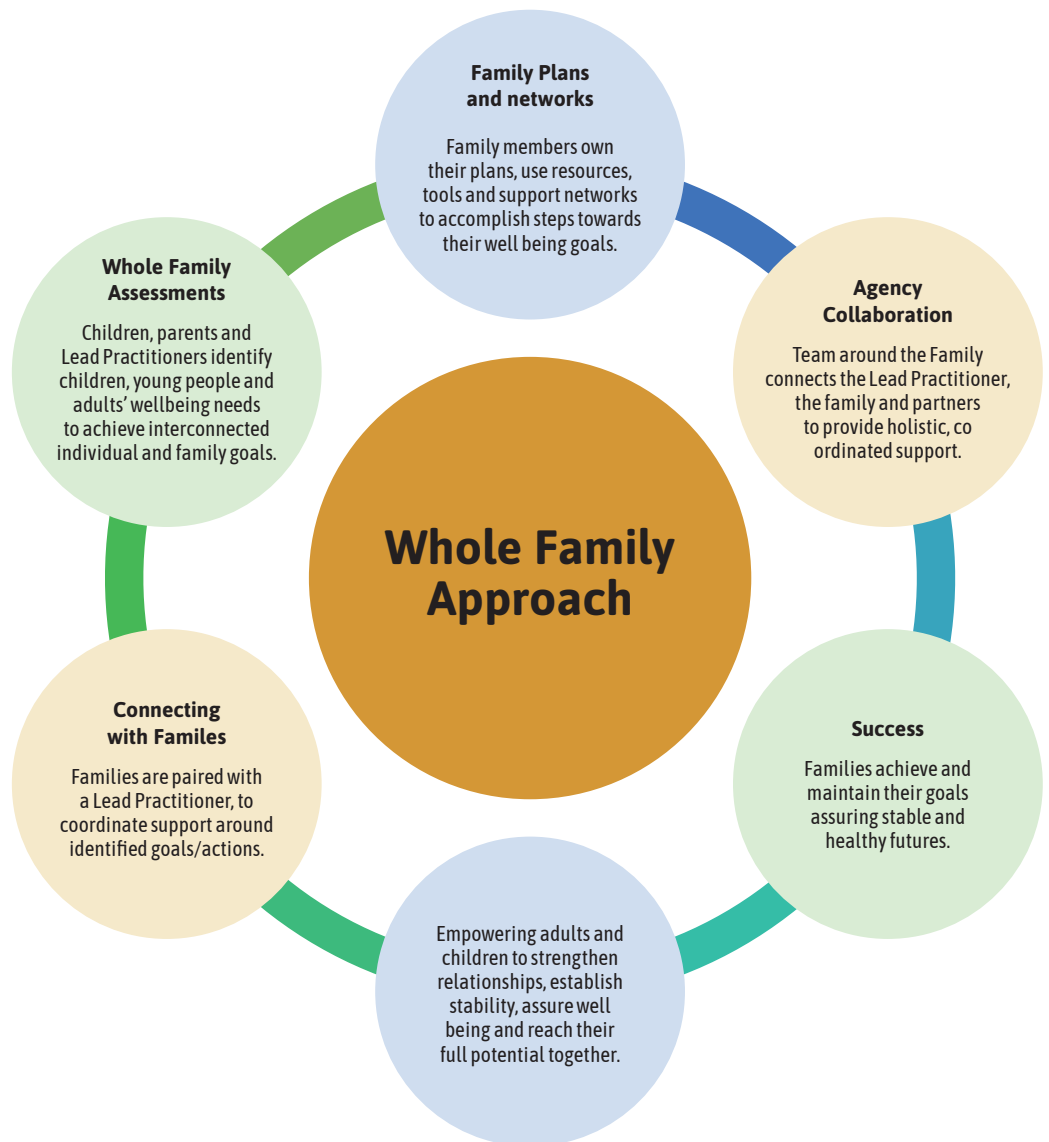


To achieve this a 'think family' approach to our Early Help and safeguarding work is essential.

We know that some families at times have difficulties in their lives, and we recognise that to support families, we need to work with, and understand, all members of the family.

The 'Whole Family Approach' provides children and adults with the tools they need to overcome challenges. Some services are already working within a 'Whole Family Approach' and we want to ensure that this is embedded in all services and agencies across Doncaster.

The diagram (right) outlines the different elements of the approach.



EARLY HELP IN DONCASTER

Early Help in Doncaster is an interconnected system of services, tools and resources working at a community support, universal an, acute and targeted level designed to improve outcomes for families across the borough.



In Doncaster we have recently introduced a new continuum of need, shown below for reference, to ensure consistent understanding of needs across the system and the level of support required by children, young people, and families.

The universal and community support services outlined above will be accessed by families at level one or level two. In addition, the acute & targeted services will be accessed by families at level three or level four.



LEVEL 1 - Universal

No additional needs - needs are met by universal services. Children who make good overall progress in all areas of universal development and receive appropriate universal services. Consider access to universal services eg. GP, dentist, health visiting, nursery, pre-school and school settings, mainstream community services provided to all - e.g. Education, GPs, dentist and the Healthy Child programme.

LEVEL 2 - Targeted - Additional needs

Children whose health and/or development may be adversely affected and would benefit from extra help in order to make the best of their life chances. A Lead Practitioner will support the family by completing a whole family assessment (this could be an Early Help Assessment) and supporting the family via a family plan. Additional support may or may not be required.

LEVEL 3 - Complex multiple needs

Children requiring Level 3 services are children with high level additional needs likely to require longer term targeted intervention from statutory and/or specialist services. A Lead Practitioner will complete a whole family assessment (Early Help Assessment), a family plan and chair a multi-agency Team Around the Family Meeting ensuring the needs of the family are met. Some children/young people, depending on level of risk and vulnerability, may be eligible for a service from children's social care to prevent moving into a high level of risk

Potential involvement of Children's Social Care from this point.

LEVEL 4 - Statutory/ Specialist/Child Protection

These children are likely suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm which is the threshold for child protection. Some children are likely to have already experienced adverse effects and their needs may not be considered by their parents/caregivers. Make a referral to Children's Services.

Child/young person and the family at the centre throughout. If unsure contact your safeguarding lead.

LOCAL DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

Team Doncaster's central mission 'Thriving People, Places & Planet' is the key driver for the actions of the partnership up to 2030 and is geared towards six wellbeing goals.

To achieve these goals, Team Doncaster has agreed the 'Great 8' Priorities. The Early Help strategy impacts directly or indirectly upon all these goals and priorities and will play an integral role in improving outcomes for children, young people, and families.

The Great 8 Priorities:

-  1. Tackling climate change
-  2. Developing the skills to thrive in life and work
-  3. Making Doncaster the best place to do business and create good jobs
-  4. Building opportunities for healthier, happier and longer lives for all
-  5. Creating safer, stronger, greener, and cleaner communities where everyone belongs
-  6. Nurturing a child and family-friendly borough
-  7. Building transport & digital connections fit for the future
-  8. Promoting the borough and its cultural, sporting and heritage opportunities



Doncaster
Delivering Together

Within the Doncaster Borough strategy there is a commitment to embedding a localities model of working.

The Localities Programme is a transformative approach focused on enhancing community-based support and improving collaboration between partnership organisations to improve local resilience. This commitment will be reflected in the Early Help strategy.

Other linked strategies include Education and Skills 2030, Children and Young People's Plan, Special Educational Needs strategy, and Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy. All these strategies share the key characteristics of being focused on prioritising early intervention and providing strengths-based support.

NATIONAL DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

Early Help in Doncaster is underpinned by several national strategic documents and the national Supporting Families programme. These are accessible via the link or QR codes below.



Working Together
to Safeguard
Children 2018

www.bit.ly/3U3avCD



Children Act 2004

www.bit.ly/3zE6xbw



Care Act 2014

www.bit.ly/3U0BUFd



Keeping Children
Safe in Education
2022

www.bit.ly/3DrJRW2



Children and
Families Act 2014

www.bit.ly/3fq2AQN



SEND Code of Practice:
0 to 25 years

www.bit.ly/3NvoGxG



Best Start in Life:
A Vision for the
1001 Critical Days

www.bit.ly/3FXfbpx



Department for Levelling Up, Housing
and Communities and Ministry of
Housing, Communities &
Local Government Supporting
Families Programme

www.bit.ly/3FHkoI0



LOCAL CONTEXT HEADLINES

Population: **312,785**
0-19 Year Olds: **73,197**

Population living in
the Top 10% Most
Deprived Areas:
79,065 (25%)

0-19 Year Olds living
in the Top 10% Most
Deprived Areas:
20,469 (29%)

Population from
Ethnic Minority
Communities: **24,719**

% of Working
population claiming
Universal Credit: **6.16%**
(National average: 5.09%)

Residents reporting
high levels of anxiety:
22% (2021)

% of Children accessing
their entitlement to
Funded Childcare:
87% (2 Year Olds)
97% (3-4 Year Olds)

Early Years
providers rated 'Good' or
'Outstanding' by Ofsted:
99%

% of Pupils entitled
to Free School Meals:
20.5% (Primary)
19.5% (Secondary)

Children and Young
People receiving Early
Help support per 10,000
of population:
353

Children in Need per
10,000 of population:
327
(Similar to
national average)

Family Hub
0-4 population:
16,628

% of Family Hub
membership against
population:
81.5%

% of Children and Young
People accessing Family Hub
services against population:
64.8%

Number of families
successfully supported
under the Stronger
Families Criteria:
In excess of 3800

OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

The pandemic had a notable impact on the Early Help system and led to an increase in vulnerability and need.

There were also fewer cases open to Early Help.

- In Q4 2019-20 the number of people receiving Early Help support per 10,000 of population was **323.24**
- By Q3 2020-21, this had dropped to **297.50**

Early Help capacity declined as partners held fewer cases due to the pressures of the pandemic

- In Q4 2019-20, prior to the pandemic, **77.7%** of cases were held by partners.
- In Q2 2021-22, they held **48.9%**.

There was also an increase in the number of people being referred into Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH). This meant the system was becoming overwhelmed.

The system has stabilised now.

A partnership improvement plan was agreed with a number of key interventions. These were:

- There was a **£0.5m** investment in the 15 Early Help staff in 2021/22 occurring alongside wider investment brought by the Recovery & Resilience Programme.
- Improvements in the working arrangements between Early Help and Children's Social Care.
- General improvements to business processes across the partnership.

Cases open to Early Help are now at a two-year high of **353.02 per 10,000** of population and contacts into MASH have stabilised.

Data is providing clear evidence that the Early Help system is having a positive impact on family outcomes.

- **92%** of families demonstrated increase confidence-evidenced through the Outcome Star process.
- **60%** of families demonstrated increased resilience-evidenced through a % decrease in vulnerability levels.

Nevertheless, we believe that the Early Help system in Doncaster has the potential to have an even greater impact on the lives of children, young people and families and we are fully committed to the aims set out in this strategy.



VISION AND COMMITMENTS

Our vision is clear.
In Doncaster we want
Early Help to be a
priority for all.

This vision is supported by 9 key commitments that have to be embodied across the partnership.

1. Never do Nothing

We will provide families with the appropriate support they need at the first time of asking.

2. Build Stronger Relationships

We will have strong trusting relationships with families, communities and colleagues.

3. Always Build on Strengths

We will work with families will build on their strengths and empower them to grow.

4. Work with Families for as Long as it Takes

We will work with families in a person and child centred way for as long as support is needed.

For families, we want support to be available in their community and accessible, without difficulty or stigma, in a way that allows families to tell their story once and fosters trusting relationships between them and professionals.

For professionals, we want early intervention and collaboration to be second nature with arrangements in place that make multi-agency working effortless and enable all professionals from across the partnership to adopt the whole family working approach in a meaningful way.

5. Empower Families and Communities

We will work on enabling families and communities to have a voice and become self sufficient.

6. Be Transparent

We will be open and honest with each other and the families they work with in order to build trust.

7. Be Flexible

We will support families creatively in a way that suits them.

8. Work Together

We will collaborate with all partners and families to maximise their impact.

9. Ensure Accountability at Every Level

We will work with staff and families to own their role within the support being offered.

OUR PRIORITIES

Our priorities can be split across four areas. These are characterised under the following themes: families, communities, leaders, and workforce. Our priorities are designed to deliver our vision for Early Help and provide families with the support they need.



PRIORITY ONE:

Build Family
Resilience and
Trust in the System

PRIORITY TWO:

Strengthen Local
Community Services
and Support Networks

PRIORITY THREE:

Cohesive, Consistent
and Collaborative
Leadership across
the Partnership

PRIORITY FOUR:

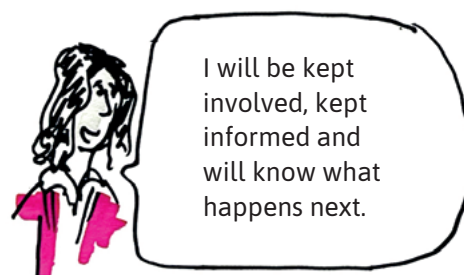
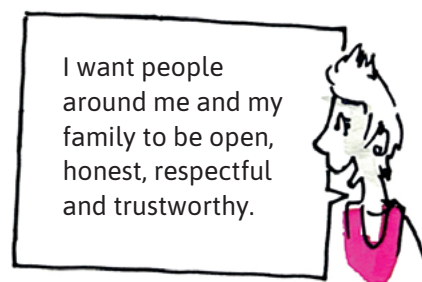
Support Professionals
across all Services to
maximise their Impact



PRIORITY ONE:

Build family resilience and trust in the system

We want families to be more resilient and trust the support that is available to them as we know this will lead to better outcomes for everyone. By incorporating the voice of families at every stage, we will ensure that the support available is right and that families trust us to deliver what is needed.



What we want to achieve...



Improve the experience for children, young people and families by ensuring that they only have to tell their story once.

Establish positive and trusting relationships with families rooted in a culture of high support and high challenge.

Support families locally at the earliest possible opportunity to help them overcome any challenges they have.

Refine the step up and step down journey to make this easier for families and ensure that families are seen by the right people at the right time.

Ensure that children, young people and families know where to go when they need help and support.

Empower children, young people and families to provide feedback on their experiences and use this to inform service delivery.

Continue to develop our approach to evidence based interventions, utilising strengths based and solution focused approaches.

Continue to support families through our nationally recognised Family Hub offer.

Maintain the high take up by families of funded entitlement to childcare, through the provision of high quality nurseries and childminders.

Evaluate the 1001 Days Programme with a view to embedding the findings across Doncaster.

Implement the 6 'Best Start in Life' recommendations.

Improve the support available in the earliest, fundamental years to ensure all children have the language and communication skills to thrive.



PRIORITY TWO:

Strengthen local community services and support networks

We want communities to have a role shaping and delivering support to families and to become focal points for practitioners, volunteers, and community members to organise around. By investing in these arrangements and building the mechanisms that allow them to thrive we will build resilience into the wider system and give communities a stake in the supportive services available to them.



What we want to achieve...

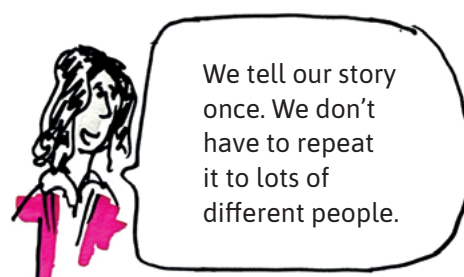
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| Implement the Your Family Local Solutions Model across Doncaster. This includes four new community hubs that co-locates professionals and connects residents to services. | Work with Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector organisations to compliment local support services by implementing a community connecting network. | Strengthen the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector through local groups with external funding. |
| Provide accessible forums for local residents in order to have a voice and shape local service design. | Develop the Your Life offer in order to increase the reach and visibility of local services. | Strengthen services and networks for families in local areas. |
| Support the aims of Education and Skills 2030 in ensuring a 'Best Start in Life' and equitable and inclusive education for all. | Targeted pathways and tailored engagement for vulnerable and minority communities will ensure that supportive services remain accessible, and inclusive. | Encourage local businesses to support and enhance the Early Help offer within their communities in order to improve outcomes for families. |



PRIORITY THREE:

Cohesive, consistent and collaborative leadership across the partnership

We want decision makers across the partnership to proactively adopt the vision and values of this strategy and take deliberate and co-ordinated steps to deliver against the strategic aims in a collaborative way. This means leaders championing early intervention and prevention, engaging with, and delivering the associated implementation plan, and taking shared accountability for our successes and our challenges.



What we want to achieve...



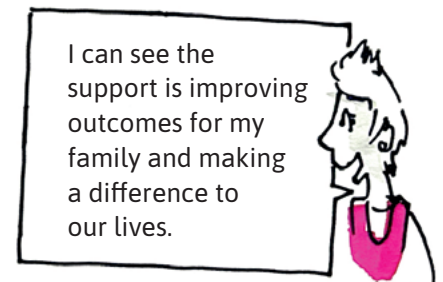
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| Ensure that every organisation represented on the Early Intervention Steering Group is signed up to the Leadership Charter. | All leaders across the partnership are fully accountable for the delivery of the strategy. | All services whether commissioned or otherwise embed the 9 key values of the Early Help strategy. |
| Commit to investment in our Early Help workforce in order to ensure there is sufficient capacity to meet need and reduce demand for acute services. | Embed the Stronger Families Early Help System Guide as a key driver of system level transformation. | Ensure consistency of MOSAIC usage in order to improve reporting capability across the partnership. |
| Refine the use of data and local intelligence in order to inform targeted service delivery. | Ensure that services offered via early help are regularly evaluated and demonstrate improved outcomes and impact, for children, young people and families. | A proactive approach to enshrining early intervention and prevention approaches in existing and future commissioning decisions. |
| Leaders commit to one lead professional, who can act as the lead for the family on behalf of all agencies. | Ensure that all assessments frameworks and arrangements are evidence based so that processes remain practical and minimise duplication. | Implement a communications plan to launch the strategy. |



PRIORITY FOUR:

Support professionals across all services to maximise their impact

We want all practitioners to embrace the whole family model of working and to have the knowledge and skills to deliver effective support. This means developing and implementing a coherent practice framework for the entire partnership that allows for both consistency and bespoke delivery. It will need to incorporate a host of evidence-based interventions. These will include signs of safety, signs of wellbeing, parenting and parental conflict programmes, trauma informed practice, relationship-based practice, outcome star, domestic abuse, and neglect toolkits, amongst others.



What we want to achieve...

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Enhance and continue to develop the early help workforce development offer to continuously improve practice and embed the whole family approach. | Implement a universal performance and quality assurance framework underpinned by a single outcomes plan. | Update practice guidance in line with the Early Help Outcomes Framework (Supporting Families) and whole family working. |
| Empower more professionals to take on the Lead Practitioner role in order to improve take up of the role across the partnership. | Increase the number of practitioners achieving the Level 3 Early Intervention qualification. | Enable the workforce to use available datasets to enhance support and risk based analysis of families' needs, including finding and offering support to families with hidden needs. |
| Embed the Graduated Approach in order to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND). | Celebrate the success of Doncaster professionals. | Support professionals to develop their knowledge and connections with local communities. |



SUCCESS CRITERIA

Priority one:

Build family resilience and trust in the system

Families in Doncaster will be better off if...

- ✓ They only have to tell their story once.
- ✓ They are telling us that they trust the system.
- ✓ There has been an increase in the numbers accessing Early Help.
- ✓ Their voice is at the heart of the support they receive and is available to them.
- ✓ The support they receive builds on their strengths and empowers them to overcome their own challenges.
- ✓ Evidence based interventions are making a difference and re-referrals into statutory services have been reduced.

Priority two:

Strengthen local community services and support networks

Families in Doncaster will be better off if...

- ✓ They are supported to overcome their challenges as early as possible in their community.
- ✓ Family and Youth Hubs demonstrate a continued increase in their service offer and participation figures.
- ✓ Your Life Doncaster becomes the central service directory for residents and professionals.
- ✓ Community organisations are key partners in the development and delivery of services.
- ✓ There has been an increase in the numbers of volunteers or community groups being trained and delivering services within Early Help.
- ✓ Local businesses are signposting services and investing in local communities to improve outcomes for families.
- ✓ There has been a reduction in the number of referrals into Social Care.
- ✓ More families that previously had no further action from Social Care received support.
- ✓ There has been an increase in the levels of external funding brought into Doncaster.

Priority three:

Cohesive, consistent and collaborative leadership across the partnership

Families in Doncaster will be better off if...

- ✓ There has been an increase in the number of lead practitioners and managers across the partnership using MOSAIC for case recording purposes leading to better data and intelligence being used to inform decision making.
- ✓ The partnership fully engages with the Early Help System Guide Self-Evaluation and leads a systematic process of change and transformations with clearly identifiable positive impacts.
- ✓ Regular evaluations are received from partners who deliver services which demonstrate improved outcomes and impact.
- ✓ We are able to make the most of the data and intelligence available to us to inform decision making across the partnership.
- ✓ There has been a reduction in the demand for statutory Tier 4 services.
- ✓ There are sufficient resources across the partnership to deliver the strategy.

Priority four:

Support professionals across all services to maximise their impact

Families in Doncaster will be better off if...

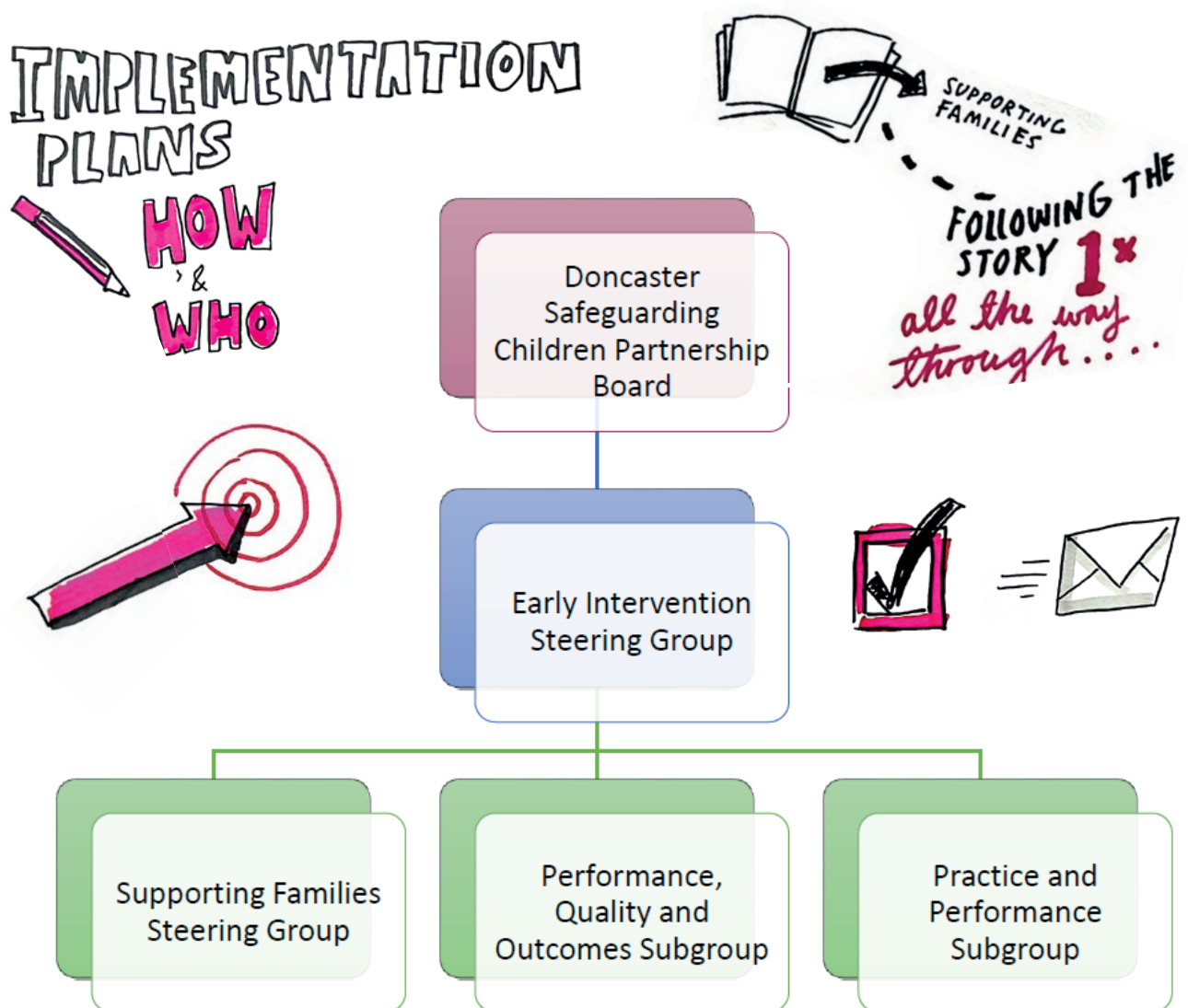
- ✓ All children, young people and families are being supported effectively by well-qualified professionals.
- ✓ We have revised and published the Early Help Practice Framework.
- ✓ More parents are being offered a parent or carer needs assessment.
- ✓ There are more practitioners and professional disciplines taking on the Lead Practitioner role and recording cases on MOSAIC.
- ✓ There has been an increase in the number of relevant practitioners accessing the Stronger Families warehouse to establish need at the point of allocation.
- ✓ There is consistently effective application of the thresholds document, which means families are seen by the right service.

GOVERNANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation plan will be designed to identify key actions and provide clear timelines alongside measurable success criteria.

This will ensure that we, as a partnership, work in a way that is SMART, ensuring that our goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound. This will be supported by a quality and performance dashboard that is currently in development. Both documents will allow us to provide regular updates into all the relevant oversight boards.

The implementation plan will be overseen by the governance structure below:



KEY PARTNERS



Doncaster
Council



DONCASTER
SAFEGUARDING
CHILDREN
PARTNERSHIP



South Yorkshire
POLICE



Doncaster
Clinical Commissioning Group



Rotherham Doncaster
and South Humber
NHS Foundation Trust



Doncaster and Bassetlaw
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust



Department
for Work &
Pensions

More detailed information about Early Help and our work in practice is provided in the Practice Guidance and Appendices on the Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Partnership website. These are accessible via the link or QR code below.

www.dscp.org.uk/professionals/early-help

