



SOMERSET

EARLY HELP STRATEGY

April 2016 to March 2019



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THE RIGHT SERVICE
IN THE RIGHT PLACE
AT THE RIGHT TIME

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Foreword

Welcome to Somerset's early help strategy. Many of you have been engaged with elements of the strategy since we began addressing the challenge of early help in May 2015. The strategy has emerged from a process of multi-agency engagement starting with a vision and charter of how we work together to provide early help combined with very practical guidance for all professionals in contact with children and families. We would like to thank all of those who have contributed to this strategy and many of you who are providing excellent early help now.

The early help strategy supports the delivery of the 7 Improvement Programmes of the Somerset Children and Young People's Plan 2016-2019, specifically Improvement Programmes:

- 1 - Supporting children, families and communities to become more resilient.**
- 5 - Providing help early and effectively.**

Other programmes will also have a direct impact in supporting the delivery of the early help strategy; for example, **Programme 7** Embedding a think family approach across the workforce.

This strategy has been developed with partners through the Somerset Children's Trust (SCT) and the Somerset Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) and aligns with Somerset's Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The delivery of the strategy and intended impact will be overseen by the SCT.

Early help is everybody's business and everyone's responsibility.

The vast majority of children grow up in loving families and supportive communities and become independent, resilient adults. Wherever possible we want this for all children and young people in Somerset, so that they and their families can support themselves by engaging with and contributing to their local communities

Children, young people and their families will receive the right intervention as early as possible to tackle problems and prevent issues escalating. All practitioners will "Think Family" meaning they look at the whole family situation and what needs to happen to improve that situation whether that means working with adults, children or the whole family.

Intervening early and effectively, when families are struggling, is essential to improve the life chances of Somerset's children, young people and their families. Effective early help will strengthen resilience in children and young people themselves, in their families and build capacity in communities that keep children, young people and their families healthy and safe.



Frances Nicholson
Lead Member for Children and Families



Julian Wooster
Director of Children's Services

What is early help?

Everyone needs help at some point in their lives, and often people find that help from their family, friends, local community and universal services for example school, GPs, pharmacists etc.

Some children and families experience more difficult situations and this is when they need some extra help. This is what is meant by early help; supporting families as soon as a problem emerges. Early help can include providing appropriate advice and support from a single agency, through to coordinated, multi-agency and intensive support, sometimes from specialist services.

Department for Education 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015'
Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children, young people and their families 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.

Supporting children and young people is the responsibility of everyone who works with and cares about children and young people. No one agency can do that alone. We work in partnership, so that children and young people and their families are heard and involved at home, at school, in their communities and particularly when they need services to help them.

Why is early help important for Somerset?

- Sorting out problems early means that children and families do better and the costs to society are less. There is lots of evidence for this through reports from Graham Allen, Munro, Marmot review, Frank Field, Early Intervention Foundation.
- Providing help early is an important part of protecting children from serious harm or neglect ('safeguarding') and improving health.
- When individuals and communities are able to help themselves, everyone benefits.
- We want to recognise the strong contribution of volunteers, communities, local charities and support groups and businesses in Somerset.
- When we provide services we want to make sure this is based on evidence of what works.
- We want to spend more of our budgets tackling problems before they get worse, but at the moment the demand for services to tackle serious problems is growing. We need to find the right balance.

"It is more cost-effective to tackle problems earlier, because it is easier to succeed and because if we tackle them later they are likely to escalate and intensify. If a child has one or two early adverse experiences this increases the risk that they will have more of them."

Graham Allen, 'Early Intervention: The Next Steps' (January 2011)



Who ‘needs’ early help in Somerset

The Somerset Children and Young People’s Plan 2016-2019 sets the vision for improved services and outcomes for children and young people over the next three years. The 2016 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) on vulnerable children and young people supports the development of this strategy and identifies risks and contributing factors, which can impact on a child’s ability to reach their full potential and affect family resilience.

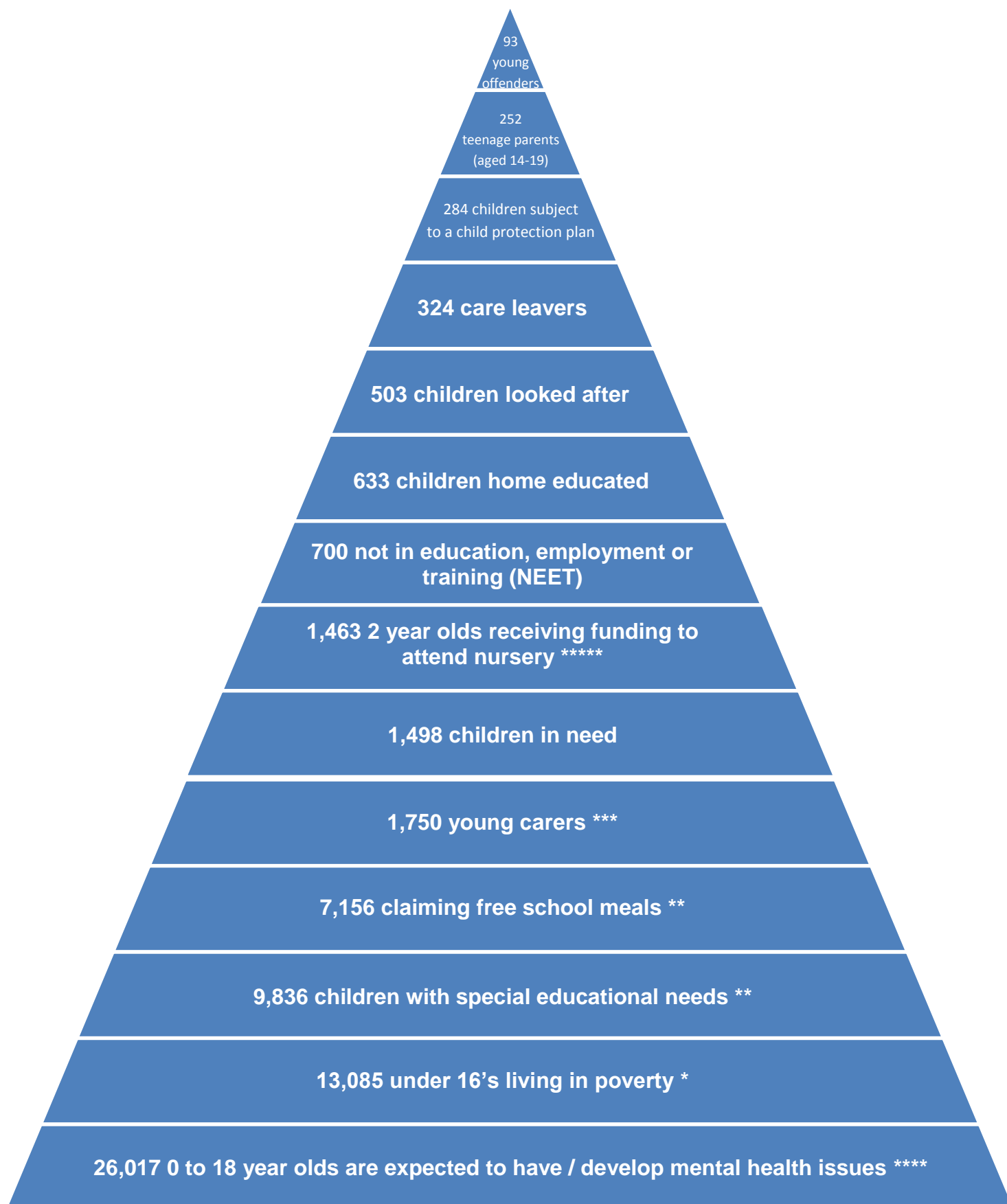
The JSNA concludes on five key areas of focus:

- Prevention and early help
- A focus on the child and family
- Providing better, joined up information
- Ensuring better integration of services
- Helping the most vulnerable first.





There are 110,000 children under the age of 18 living in Somerset; 30,000 of these are aged 0-4. Of these 110,000 children, as at March 2016 there were:



Note: the same children may appear in more than one section in the triangle above

Data sources: * 2011 census ** January 2016 school census *** estimated from 2011 census **** CAMHs
Pyramid of Need in Somerset (Tier 1-4) - calculated using prevalence rates from Mental Health of Children and Young People in Great Britain survey 2004 (2016 MHCYP Survey underway) ***** Funded 2 year olds for spring term 2016


The local Troubled Families programme has identified 7,700 families within Somerset as of the 9 June 2016 requiring support across the 6 main Troubled Families criteria groups. During phase one over 870 families were supported to make positive changes.

Table showing 14 most prevalent criteria identified in Somerset for Troubled Families Expanded Programme since 1 January 2014 as at 9 June 2016.

Criteria detail	Number of Troubled Families	% of Troubled Families
Non-Working Benefits	4113	53%
Persistent Absence	3895	51%
Children in need	3559	46%
Police Callouts	2716	35%
Experienced Domestic abuse	1450	19%
Anti-Social Behaviour	1276	17%
S47 Enquiry (child protection concern)	1199	16%
Out of Work Benefits	1095	14%
PRU or not on School Roll	914	12%
Child Protection Plan	612	8%
3 Fixed Term Exclusions	489	6%
Perpetrated Domestic abuse	338	4%
Youth Crime	255	3%
Teen Parent	217	3%

During 2015/16, 961 Early Help Assessments (EHA) were initiated (intent registered by a professional to undertake an assessment) and 699 were completed (Assessment complete & action plan being carried out).

Since January 2016 to 31 May 2016 the number of EHAs initiated numbered 379 and 208 were completed.



Our local data along with national analysis of particular cohorts of children help us identify certain factors that suggest a family may need more help. The 2016 JSNA identifies the complexity of vulnerability for individuals, within their families and their community and the impact this has on children and young people.

In Somerset these are the families we want to ensure we can identify and support:

- Child(ren) not regularly attending school
- Suspected domestic abuse
- Family mental health issues
- Family alcohol and substance misuse
- Adult(s) and young people who are out of work and/or at risk of financial insecurity
- Child(ren) who frequently abscond from home
- Dangerous or unsanitary living conditions
- Poor family health
- Social isolation
- Suspected criminal behaviour and/or gang involvement
- Teenage parents and their children
- Children who have caring responsibilities
- Children with special educational needs or a disability (SEND).

Shared vision for Health and Wellbeing in Somerset

People live healthy and independent lives, supported by thriving and connected communities, with timely access to high quality and efficient public services when they need them.





Somerset Early Help Charter



Our Vision

Early Help 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, thereby improving the overall wellbeing and quality of life of all Somerset's children, young people and their families.

The Early Help Charter is not about creating new structures or services, but establishing a cohesive, collaborative Early Help offer delivered jointly by all partners and a commitment to providing the right service, in the right place at the right time by:

- Working better together and in an honest way with the consent of the child and their family.
- Identifying strengths and needs, and finding practical and achievable solutions.
- Providing the right information and advice to enable choice for families so they can be empowered to make positive changes themselves with tailored support where needed.
- Helping families build protective factors and family resilience to prevent situations escalating or recurring.



Our Principles

Within this vision, our Early Help approach is based on a set of shared principles:

- Parents have the primary responsibility to meet the needs of their children. Parenting can be challenging and asking for help should be seen as a sign of responsibility rather than parenting failure.
- Families tell their story once and receive the right help at the right time resulting in a sustainable independence and a positive future.
- All professionals have the right to support and guidance appropriate to meet the needs of children and families they are working with – from their own and partner agencies; enabling professionals to act with emotional intelligence and work in an open and transparent way with families and with each other, with the confidence to intervene and challenge positively when appropriate.
- Problems may emerge at any point through childhood and adolescence. Consistent Early Help is provided to prevent or reduce the need for statutory or specialist interventions wherever possible. Early Help seeks to meet the need, support the family in resolving the problem and prevent it becoming entrenched.
- Effective Early Help is underpinned by good practice in information sharing, clear communication and understanding between parents, children and professionals who work with them.
- Universal and targeted services working with children and adults have a role to act early to prevent needs escalating. Universal and targeted services must remain involved even if a child and family is receiving additional or specialist support so there is a joint, whole-system response to meeting outcomes and needs.



What does our strategy cover?

This strategy sets out:

- The early help outcomes we want to achieve for children and families.
- How we will assess the effectiveness of early help services provided by all statutory partners in Somerset.
- How agencies will develop a co-ordinated approach and develop working together through processes, structures and workforce development.

The outcomes we want to achieve are:

- Young people and families are in control and know where to access help and advice to manage their own health and wellbeing.
- Children, young people and families are enabled to lead healthy lives.
- More children and young people will have good emotional health and wellbeing, are emotionally resilient, and equipped to manage their lives.
- Every child will achieve well above expectations and not be held back by their social and personal background, special educational need or disability.
- All children get the best start in the early years; all pupils can go to a good school and have high aspirations for their future.
- Children and young people are protected from harm and well cared for at home wherever possible.
- Parents are supported to be effective parents.

Our aim is that families are able to help themselves and find solutions to problems so they do not become dependent on services but develop the resilience to deal with their problems. Wherever possible we want family, friends, neighbours and local community groups to provide help when it is needed. Where further help is required this needs to be provided as quickly and easily as possible, so we want universal services for example, health services, children's centres and education settings, to be the first place where we support children to be safe, healthy and to learn effectively.

To support the Children and Young People's Plan 2016-2019 outcomes, our aim through our early help strategy is to:

- **Support children, young people and families to help themselves and become more resilient whenever possible.**
- **Make sure all services 'think family' and quickly identify children, young people, adults and families who might need extra help.**
- **Make sure all services act quickly and with effective interventions as soon as they know help is needed.**
- **Ensure that services co-ordinate support for children and families through the provision of early help assessment and an agreed plan.**


In Somerset we are already doing these things, but we now need to ensure all partners are involved and we improve collectively. This strategy has been written along with a number of other key documents (outlined later) to help all staff working with families understand better what we need to do and how to do it.



What have we achieved in Somerset so far?



- ✓ Established the “getset” service encompassing children’s centre services and family support services across tiers 1-3 of need.
- ✓ Achieved the national target for numbers of health visitors working in Somerset.
- ✓ Achieved the first phase of the national troubled families programme.
- ✓ Established a number of ‘One Teams’ in high demand areas that are providing multi-agency professional hubs to support families.
- ✓ Held an Early Help Conference in May 2015 to develop the Early Help Charter which all partners are signed up to.
- ✓ Refreshed the membership and role of the Early Help Strategic Commissioning Programme Board.
- ✓ Agreed with Somerset Education Partnership Board and nine GP Federations that the delivery of early help at tiers 1 and 2 would be based around schools.
- ✓ Role of the Lead Professional Workshop to raise awareness of the role, including who can undertake the role and myth buster.
- ✓ Early Help Mobilisation Workshop to produce 4 district action plans though we need to do more to make sure this work happens at local levels, possibly through strengthened and revised 4 area advisory boards.
- ✓ Launched communication materials to raise awareness and shared understanding of early help.
- ✓ Launched the first Parent and Family Support Advisors (PFSAs) conference in September 2015 with follow up in June 2016.
- ✓ Ran 4 ‘Improving outcomes for vulnerable pupils’ events with schools and partners during November 2015 to look at how schools should use their pupil premium money to improve outcomes for vulnerable learners. Proposals for the ‘Team Around the School’ model came from these events.
- ✓ New thresholds guidance agreed through a series of multi-agency workshops and formally launched in February 2016.

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- ✓ Launched consultation helpline for safeguarding leads during February 2016 to support the new thresholds guidance.
 - ✓ Created reference groups for early help practitioners, one multi-agency and one specifically for schools to shape the 'Team Around the School' pilots.
 - ✓ Produced Early Help Core Competency Framework and Self-Assessment Toolkit.
 - ✓ Held an assessment and referral workshop to improve understanding of the multitude of assessment and referral forms that are in use across the partnership with the aim to streamline all assessment and referral forms into an electronic form which will go live in September 2016.
 - ✓ Launched four 'Team Around the School' pilots during January 2016 with plans for evaluation and further rollout across the county.
 - ✓ Work is underway to introduce an electronic early help case management system within Somerset County Council in early 2017.
 - ✓ Developing the Early Help Collaboration Tool for September 2016 which will enable professionals to hold virtual 'Team Around the Child' meetings.
 - ✓ Developing Somerset Choices which is an online information, advice and service directory portal that the public and professionals can use.





What we need to do during 2016-2019

We already have many elements of early help in place but we know we need to do more to embed this and to improve overall.

The information within the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment helped to inform the Improvement Programmes within the Somerset Children and Young People's Plan 2016-2019; two of the 7 Improvement Programmes specifically relate to the aim of this strategy:




Improvement Programme 1 – Supporting children, families and communities to become more resilient

The outcomes we want to achieve are:

- Young people and families are in control and know where to access help and advice to manage their own health and wellbeing.
- Families and communities are thriving, resilient and support each other.

Our priorities are to:

- Empower children, families and communities by enabling them to have the tools, skills and information they need to help themselves and that allows them to manage the common challenges of family life within their families and communities.
- Empower parents to have the confidence, knowledge and skills to undertake their parenting responsibilities.



Improvement programme 5 – providing help early and effectively

The outcomes we want to achieve are:

- Families receive good quality multi-agency help to support parents or carers in changing behaviour so risks to children are reduced.
- Fewer children and families will need high cost, statutory interventions.
- Staff have the skills and knowledge to identify issues early in families and to address those issues quickly and effectively.

Our priorities are to:

- Establish early help hubs in local communities that offer multi-agency integrated services that identify and support children and families who need additional help and can intervene quickly and effectively.
- Provide a comprehensive early help offer within a simplified identification and support system.
- Deliver a successful Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Troubled Families Programme that is embedded in the mainstream delivery of the early help hubs.

The specific actions we need to take are included in an action plan which the Early Help Commissioning Board will agree annually; the 16/17 action plan is included at appendix 1 below.

Partner priorities

Safer Somerset Partnership 2015/16 priority

Focusing on Families through Early Help by identifying and preventing vulnerability in our communities and reducing service demand through preventative activity.

Somerset County Council's County Plan 2016-20

To focus our help early and effectively, so it has the greatest impact. We know that helping families early will make a huge difference to their opportunities later in life.

Somerset's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-2018 Shared Vision

People live healthy and independent lives, supported by thriving and connected communities with timely and easy access to high-quality and efficient public services when they need them.

The Police and Crime Plan 2015 – 2017 priorities

Prevention and early intervention approaches to safeguarding people from harm and reducing offending – particularly in young people.

NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group Strategy 2014 - 2019

That people of all ages in Somerset understand the need and feel able to take responsibility for their own and their community's health and wellbeing.



What does effective early help feel like?

➤ For families

- They tell their story once.
- They are listened to and involved at all stages.
- They have a key contact or lead professional who co-ordinates their support and keeps things simple and manageable.
- They have a trusting but challenging relationship with their key contact / lead professional.
- They are empowered to make the changes they want to in their lives.
- They focus on their strengths and building resilience.
- They know where to find information, advice and support in future.

I am happy for my child's needs to be discussed by lots of local professionals as I know how difficult this can be to arrange.

Families like the fact that agencies communicate regularly.

It has had a positive effect on the family and for their children.





➤ For professionals

A strong early help system means a capable and confident early help workforce, supported by effective and efficient processes. The critical features of an early help system include:

- Professionals identify quickly the children and adults who would benefit from early help.
- An early help assessment that identifies the help necessary to prevent needs escalating.
- A think family or holistic approach that addresses the needs of the children within the wider family context.
- A relationship with a trusted lead professional who co-ordinates the support needed from other partner agencies.
- A simple, streamlined referral and assessment process.
- A multi-disciplinary approach bringing together a range of professional skills and expertise in a 'Team Around the Child' and 'Team Around the School'.
- Provision of targeted, effective services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to significantly improve their outcomes.
- Professionals empower individuals and families to develop the capacity to resolve their own problems.

To help professionals there will be a range of documents to support the delivery of this strategy:

[Effective Support for Children and Families in Somerset](#) - which outlines Somerset's approach to the levels of need, how to identify what level of intervention a child or family may need, and the differences between early help and statutory child protection.

[Step up, step down protocol](#) – guidance on the process of ensuring children are supported as needs escalate or lessen.

[Early Help Offer](#) - what early help is available in Somerset and this is all included on Somerset Choices portal.

[Team Around the School Handbook and Toolkit](#) – advice to schools and Community Learning Partnerships to help set up and manage the team around the school multi-agency meetings.

[Professional Choices](#) - is a new website that will make it easier for professionals to work together. The three main elements are:

- **[Early Help Assessment and Practitioners Guide](#)**: The Early Help Assessment and guidance
- **[Virtual Meeting Room](#)**: A secure online area allowing multi-agency professionals to share and collaborate on documents as well as plan and co-ordinate actions as part of a 'Team Around the Child'.
- **[Who's Who directory](#)**: Making it easy to search for other professionals who work with children and families.

↘ For partner agencies

- Demand for high need and/or specialist high cost services are reduced.
- The workforce is motivated and confident, skilled and experienced.
- Partners work well together – sharing information and effective practice, and developing creative solutions with families so they get the help they need.
- Data and intelligence is shared at district and county level so resources are targeted effectively at particular issues in particular locations.
- The performance and impact of early help is assessed collectively to inform future decision making.
- Proposed changes in one organisation are shared early with other partners so the impact on the early help system is understood and mitigating action can be taken.



How will we know if early help is working?

A number of key outcome, output and process measures will be reported to the Early Help Commissioning Board to monitor the delivery of this strategy and action plan in line with the Children and Young People's Improvement Programmes 1 and 5. This will enable the Board to ensure our approach to early help is working and to quickly identify where there may be issues.

The chair of the Early Help Commissioning Board will produce quarterly highlight reports for the Somerset Children's Trust Executive, with further reporting to the Somerset Children's Trust Board, Somerset County Council Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and the Health and Wellbeing Board

The effectiveness of early help on individual families will be measured through case work audits and supervision of professionals by their own partner agency. This will be assured through the activity of the Somerset Safeguarding Children's Board.

The new multi-agency 'Team Around the School' panels will monitor the impact they have in their locality. In addition we want the 4 area advisory boards to assess and act on their own local data and intelligence on the effectiveness of the early help system for them and their own particular local needs. This local information will feed into the Early Help Commissioning Board which will take a countywide overview as highlighted above.

The new Somerset Family Outcomes Framework will provide the framework on which individual family issues and outcomes, local intelligence and county performance data can be overlaid.



