

# SUPPORTING FAMILIES TO GIVE CHILDREN THE BEST START IN LIFE

The text is surrounded by four stylized illustrations of families. Top left: A man in a blue shirt, a small child in a blue shirt, and a woman in a green dress holding hands. Top right: A woman in a blue dress, a woman in a purple dress, and a child in a green dress walking together. Bottom left: A man in a blue shirt and a woman in a dark blue dress with their arms raised. Bottom right: A woman in a blue dress, a woman in a purple dress, and a child in a green dress walking together.

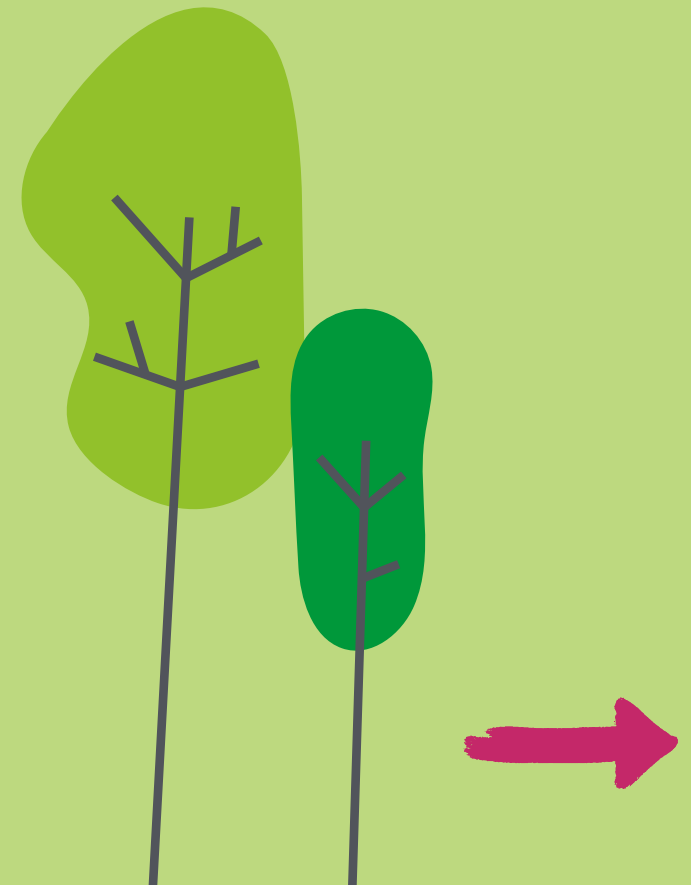
Our early help strategy to support Northumberland children and families

2021-2024



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## FOREWORD

On behalf of the Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership, we are delighted to present Supporting Families to give Children the Best Start in Life, which is our early help approach and strategy to respond to the needs of children and families in Northumberland from 2021 - 2024.

This approach and strategy builds on our existing early help guidance and is the culmination of a great deal of work by our many partners. It also reflects the wide range of agencies and expertise that we are fortunate to have within our partnership in Northumberland. Northumberland's early help approach focuses a relational approach to family support, providing opportunities to build valued and trusted relationships, both with professionals and across the community. This approach is crucial in improving outcomes for children and young people as well as managing demand and cost pressures.

Our early help offer is critical in identifying emerging need and galvanising multi-agency support to respond effectively and creatively. We have come a long way over the last 3 years in our early help journey and we are all committed to taking the next 3 years to build upon the strong foundations we have.

This strategy provides a great opportunity for Northumberland, but to make it work we will need the effort and commitment of all partners across Northumberland. We look forward to working with you to make sure that families in Northumberland receive the right help, at the right time in the right way for them.

Cath McEvoy-Carr



Executive Director for Adult Social  
Care and Children's Services

Northumberland City Council

Siobhan Brown



Chief Operating Officer

Northumberland Clinical  
Commissioning Group

Lisa Laverick



Detective Superintendent,  
Safeguarding Department

Northumbria Police

## WHAT IS THE EARLY HELP LANDSCAPE IN 2021?

Here in Northumberland, we are defining our early help approach to meet the specific needs of Northumberland children and their families and there are national programmes and guidance to support us in this:

*Working together to safeguard children 2018 Chapter 1: [Early Help](#)*

"Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Early help can also prevent further problems arising, for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care."

*Supporting Families Programme*

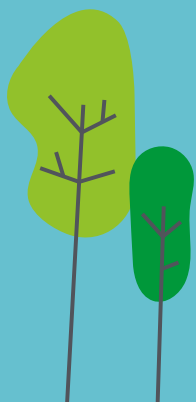
This [national programme](#) is about building resilience by providing effective, whole family support at the earliest possible point, where joined up local services are able to identify families in need and provide them with the right support at the right time.

*Independent Review of Children's Social Care*

The [Case for Change](#) report states that (early) help should improve children's lives through supporting and strengthening family relationships and resources to enable children to thrive and keep families together, helping them to provide the safe, nurturing environments that children need.

*The Best Start for Life, Early Years Review*

The core offer for Northumberland's Family Hubs will be based the [Best Start for Life](#) report. There are six action areas: Seamless support for new families; A welcoming Hub for the family; The information families need when they need it; An empowered Start for Life workforce; Continually improving the Start for Life offer; and Leadership for change.



# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY EARLY HELP?

Early help is offered everyday by communities, volunteers, charities, children's centres (family hubs) and other early years settings, early help family workers, schools and universal and tiered health services.

It is the term used in Northumberland that describes our approach to supporting children, young people and their families to prevent problems emerging (prevention), or as soon as problems emerge (intervention). This could be on a whole range of social, health, educational or financial issues.

Early help is a collaborative approach not a provision and relies on local agencies working together effectively with families to identify who needs help and then meet their varied needs.

Intervening as early as possible, regardless of the age of the child or young person, can positively improve their outcomes.

Thank you for today.  
Kids had a great day at  
school XXX made 100  
friends and XXX didn't  
want to come home!  
We've had spag bol  
and walked down to  
Carlisle park with  
the dogs,  
feeling much less  
overwhelmed

You have been such an  
amazing support - from  
the bottom of my heart  
and behalf of all 3  
girls - thank you. Let  
me know if I can fill  
in an evaluation sheet  
or anything because  
I would love to give  
positive feedback

The support has  
been really helpful at a  
time when I needed it,  
it's made a difference to  
my life and for my son,  
things have got done

Always been  
there. Someone  
to talk to and share  
worries, with friendly  
and informative no  
judgement, no false  
promises

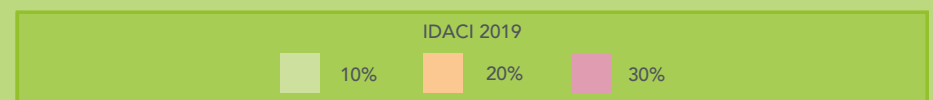
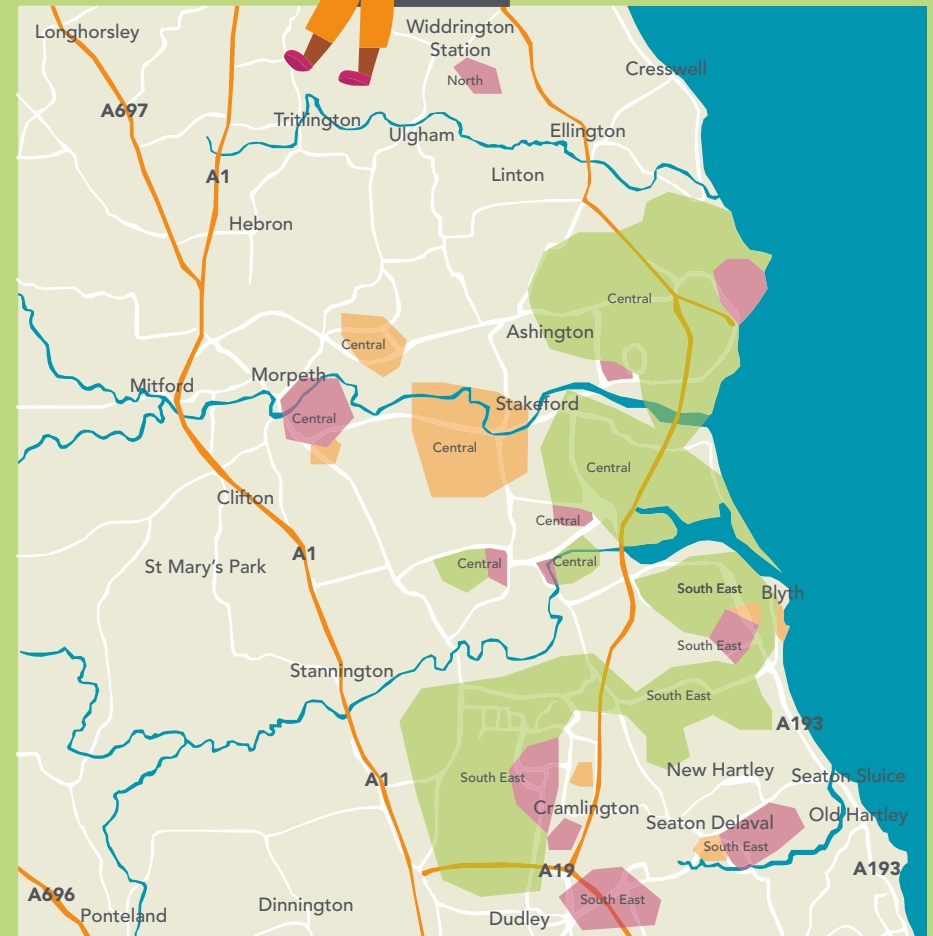


# WHY DO WE NEED EARLY HELP IN NORTHUMBERLAND?

Northumberland is a large, diverse county, home to 316,000 people. 97% of its area classed as rural, the county is sparsely populated with 63 people per km<sup>2</sup>. Within the urban communities of the south east of the county there are areas of high levels of deprivation and need, whilst in other areas there are small rural communities with limited public transport links, access to services and social isolation.

- 64,612 young people aged 0-19
- 7,060 children and young people (0-25 year olds) have Special Educational Needs and/or a Disability SEND
- 36.2% of children living in poverty
- 5.4% unemployment rate
- 1,920 Early help requests in 2020/21
- 19,000 'workless' families
- 5,693 referrals into the Front Door in 2020
- The number of Education Health Care Plans in Northumberland has increased from 1,458 in 2015 to 2,174 in 2020/21
- 6,909 incidents of domestic abuse in Northumberland in 2020/21  
42% of these involving children
- 17% adults living with a child and 33% parents living separately use alcohol and drugs problematically
- There were 180 reports of problematic parental conflict in 6-month period in 2021
- Our most common areas of need are:  
Social, emotional and mental health needs  
Speech, language and communication needs

This makes plain the scale of the challenges for the county, and why providing high quality early help to those families who need this.



**Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)** measures the proportion of all children aged 0 to 15 living in income deprived families.



# OUR EARLY HELP APPROACH

Northumberland's early help approach is based on a relational culture when families are seeking help, information, or support; building valued and trusted relationships with the people they meet.

We will build on our successful partnership approach to develop a Family Hub model which will give families seamless transitions from one level of help and support to another within a well-designed system. The model will be flexible and can be designed to suit differing locality needs, and to evolve as circumstances change over time.

Our early help offer includes the [Prevention and Intervention Pathway](#) which promotes key child development milestones (prevention) and evidence-based health, relationship and parenting programmes (intervention).

A model of virtual / blended delivery developed in response to the pandemic has been particularly successful in rural areas.

Families previously unable to make long journeys to the centres have welcomed joining our programmes virtually. We will continue to develop this offer as a core part of our delivery.

We are trialing a multi-agency, team around the school approach, initially with 4 schools. A small multidisciplinary

team will go into schools on a regular basis to have a solution focussed discussion about any learner who does not have an allocated worker where the school are unsure what is the right support route. In addition, in some localities, early help staff are a named link for schools in the area.

Formal and informal community networks and interventions can create a safe environment for growth and development, providing local services for the children themselves and also for parents and wider family members. In line with the adage 'it takes a village to raise a child', in Northumberland we want to ensure that local community groups and organisations understand the significance of their role in prevention and early intervention by providing positive experiences, relationships and support for children and families.

CARE Northumberland is a multi-agency approach across both children and adult services to reduce children's experience of adversity and minimise the impact on the health and wellbeing of both children and adults.



1Y Babies, a dad:  
"Meeting new people, seeing my baby interacting with another baby. Learning and watching videos. The catch-up sessions were really helpful with hand outs and the video links sent out to watch at home. I have learnt a hell of a lot. Weaning and when to start it. Baby massage and I now do it with her after her bath and bedtime. Coping with crying, baby safety and choking. I did not find the course repetitive"



# KEY INDICATORS FOR MEASURING SUCCESS

It is important that measures of success are monitored to know that we are meeting our aims. The following indicators will demonstrate the effectiveness of the strategy:



*Increase in the number of partner-led early help assessments*

*Number of families making progress against the goals in their help plan*

*Number of families who are satisfied with the support they receive*

*Reduction in the number of families who require a social work intervention*

*Reduction in the number of statutory social work assessments which result in closure*

*Reduction of contacts to the front door with no service allocated - meaning families are supported by those who already know them*

*Number of multi-agency practitioners and community members trained in Early Help related courses*

*Reduction of children with special educational needs with fixed term and permanent exclusions*

*Reduction in the % of young people educated in alternative provision*

*Increase in the % of early years settings applying to the Disability Access fund (enabling extra support for children with additional needs)*

*Increase in the % of children in early years settings who are school ready*

*Increase in the % of children who are a healthy weight*

*Reduction in A&E attendances for children and young people*

*Reduction in % of first time entrants to the youth criminal justice service, and a reduction in re-offending rates amongst young people*





# NORTHUMBERLAND EARLY HELP STRATEGY

## SUPPORTING FAMILIES TO GIVE CHILDREN THE BEST START IN LIFE





# Useful web pages:

HOME

"I would recommend early help to people I think everyone who struggles should have early help to get you back on your feet."

You have listened to me and understood and helped me to find my confidence helping me through a bad place"

General information about services for children and families

Early Help in Northumberland

Healthy Parental Relationships in Northumberland

Practical information for people experiencing domestic abuse

Having your baby the Northumbria way

Primary Mental Health Team- Mental Health

Children and Young People's Service- Mental Health

Northumberland Local Offer for Children with SEND

Northumberland Communities Together

Northumberland Children's Centres

Northumberland 0-19 (Health Visiting and School Nursing) Service

click me

"I feel safe" - 16 year old when asked during closure what has changed since working with Early Help

