

Children and Young People's Early Help Strategy 2022 - 2027



Barnsley – the place
of possibilities.



BARNSLEY
Metropolitan Borough Council

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Introduction

The Children and Young People’s Early Help Strategy 2022–2027 for Barnsley sets out the long-term vision and priorities where we, our partners and communities will continue to work together to deliver the best outcomes for all children and young people within the borough. This strategy provides the foundations for Barnsley’s future, supporting our recovery from COVID-19 and building our borough back better, fairer, and more inclusive. Working towards Barnsley being the place of possibilities.

Resources are reducing, and demand for services is increasing. It is therefore important that, as we work through our journey to recover from the current pandemic, we work together and pool our resources to make sure people in our communities get the right support, at the right time, in the right place as early as possible.

Early Help is our approach to providing support to children, young people and their families as soon as problems start to emerge or when it’s likely there’ll be problems in the future.

The Children and Young People’s Early Help Strategy will bring together a range of public, private, voluntary, community and social enterprise partners to maximise capacity and build resilience. It will promote collective ownership and accountability for the delivery of our vision, priorities and outcomes. The strategy sets out our strategic priorities and approach to make sure Early Help is understood, accessible and firmly embedded within working practices.

Barnsley’s Early Help approach focuses on reframing the relationship with our communities, developing resilience and empowering children, young people and families ensuring that our work is led by their voice. This approach is crucial in improving outcomes for children and young people and their families as well as managing demand and cost pressures.

Our Early Help offer is critical in identifying emerging needs and bringing together multi-agency support to respond effectively and creatively during times of need, as was seen during the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown. The learning from these experiences will help us to shape and influence our ongoing practice across the partnership alongside key developments such as the implementation of Family Hubs, Best Start for Life, Reducing Parental Conflict, our Hidden Harm Strategy, the Healthy Child Programme, expansion of the Supporting Families programme and the independent review of Children’s Social Care (undertaken by Josh MacAlister).

This strategy and approach will underpin Barnsley’s commitment to making the town the place of possibilities, and its success is reliant on the effort and commitment of all partners, including our children and families. We look forward to working with you to make sure that children and families in Barnsley receive the help they need as soon as they need it and guarantee that everyone can reach their full potential.



Carly Speechley,
Executive Director for Children’s Services



Cllr Trevor Cave,
Cabinet Spokesperson for Children’s Services

2022-27 Strategy evolution

Our previous strategy (All Age Early Help Strategy) helped us to identify the things we could do to best improve outcomes for the community of Barnsley. The strategy supported us to ensure that Early Help is everyone's responsibility, ensuring that there was no 'wrong door' addressing root cause and building resilience within in our communities.

During the pandemic we have seen an increase in the demand and pressure on children's services within both Early Help and statutory children's services. Our strategy for the next five years builds on the outcomes achieved through our previous strategy and the strong foundations laid, taking into account the context shaped by the pandemic and national strategy which raises still further our ambitions for children and young people.

The Early Help Strategy: Children and Young People outlines the next phase in our delivery of Early Help and provides our high-level shared vision, outcomes, and priorities for Barnsley. It reflects the **Barnsley 2030 vision**: 'Barnsley – the place of possibilities', and its ambitions within the scope of providing Early Help and developing resilient communities.

Its success is bound by all communities and partners working in collaboration to make the borough the best place that it can be in respect of Early Help and prevention for children and young people.

Early Help is an approach that is about making sure that through early identification, we can provide the **right support in the right place at the right time**. It's about guaranteeing that children, young people, adults, families and communities are self-aware, able to identify when they need support and access appropriate services to meet their needs.

Central to our Early Help approach is the understanding that **Early Help is everyone's responsibility**. We all need to work together to support the early identification of people who would benefit from Early Help and participate in a coordinated early assessment of needs and development of a tailored support plan to help improve their outcomes. This is about adopting a **whole system approach with strong partnership working and system leadership** support as the key building blocks, which includes awareness raising with others who may come into contact with adults or children through their job roles, who may not see their role as operating within the early help system.

Early Help is about giving people the help they need as early as possible and supporting children, young people and their families to do more for themselves. Help may be required at any point in someone's life and can involve interventions early on in life and early in the development of a problem. This is about **empowering local people and communities to build capacity and resilience** to do more for themselves.



This strategy delivers against the Barnsley 2030 plan ambitions with a specific focus on delivering against 'Healthy', 'Learning' and 'Growing' themes:

- Everyone is able to enjoy a life in good physical and mental health
- Fewer people live in poverty, and everyone has the resources they need to look after themselves and their families
- People can access the right support, at the right time and place and are able to tackle problems early
- Our diverse communities are welcoming, supportive and resilient
- Children and young people aim high and achieve their full potential with improved educational achievement and attainment
- Everyone has the opportunity to create wider social connections and enjoy cultural experiences
- Lifelong learning is promoted and encouraged, with an increase in opportunities that will enable people to get into, progress at and stay in work
- Everyone fulfils their learning potential, with more people completing higher-level skills studies than ever before
- Residents, businesses and organisations are more confident in accessing and using digital resources, benefitting all aspects of daily life

Themes	Healthy Barnsley	Learning Barnsley	Growing Barnsley	Sustainable Barnsley
Ambitions	<p>Everyone is able to enjoy a life in good physical and mental health.</p> <p>Fewer people live in poverty and everyone has the resources they need to look after themselves and their families.</p> <p>People can access the right support, at the right time and place and are able to tackle problems early.</p> <p>Our diverse communities are welcoming, supportive and resilient.</p>	<p>Children and young people aim high and achieve their full potential with improved educational achievement and attainment.</p> <p>Everyone has the opportunity to create wider social connections and enjoy cultural experiences.</p> <p>Lifelong learning is promoted and encouraged, with an increase in opportunities that will enable people get into, progress at and stay in work.</p> <p>Everyone fulfils their learning potential, with more people completing higher-level skills studies than ever before.</p>	<p>Local businesses are thriving through early-stage support and opportunities to grow.</p> <p>Barnsley is known as a great place to invest, where businesses and organisations provide diverse and secure employment opportunities, contributing to an economy that benefits everyone.</p> <p>People have a wider choice of quality, affordable and sustainable housing, to suit their needs and lifestyle.</p> <p>Residents, businesses and organisations are more confident in accessing and using digital resources, benefitting all aspects of daily life.</p>	<p>People live in sustainable communities with reduced carbon emissions and increased access to affordable and sustainable energy sources.</p> <p>People can get around in Barnsley easier than ever, with an increase in cycle routes and better connections across the borough.</p> <p>Barnsley has increased the amount of renewable energy that is generated within the borough.</p> <p>People are proud of and look after their local environment.</p>

Why do we need Early Help? The challenges in Barnsley and the context

Barnsley Council serves a population of 248,071¹ which, since the 2011 census, has grown by 6.9 per cent - broadly equal to the England average for population growth. The population is predicted to grow to over 257,000 by 2025, and then to 264,000 by 2030. There are currently 51,621 children and young people under the age of 18, which is approximately one-fifth (20.8 per cent) of the total population of the borough. Life expectancy is lower in the borough than the national average, with females on average living to 80.2 years compared to an 82.6 year England average, and males living to 76.3 years compared to an 78.7 year England average.

Population projections:

Age band	2015	2030	Per cent change
0-4 years	14,664	13,276	-9.5%
5-9 years	14,162	13,620	-3.8%
10-14 years	12,670	14,704	16.1%
15-19 years	13,584	15,122	11.3%
20-64 years	139,928	145,183	3.8%
65 years and over	44,847	60,471	34.8%
Total	239,855	262,376	9.4%

Deprivation continues to affect a significant number of families in Barnsley. The 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) ranks Barnsley as the 38th most deprived local authority in England, out of 317. A significant proportion of children and young people (15.1 per cent) are growing up in households where no adults work, and 22.4 per cent of children and young people live in low-income households. Both statistics are higher than regional and national averages. There is a known correlation between rising levels of deprivation and the need for children's social care intervention. During the pandemic we have seen significant increases in demand for Early Help support, Children In Need and Child Protection.

Below are the rankings for Barnsley relative to the other 316 Local Authorities using the 'rank of average score' by domain (where 1 = most deprived, 317 = least deprived)

- 43rd – income deprivation
- 27th – employment deprivation
- 15th – education and skills training
- 22nd – health deprivation & disability
- 31st – crime

There has been a 5.1 per cent increase in the Child Poverty rate since 2014/15, to 33 per cent. This compares to a UK average of 31 per cent (+2 per cent increase). 24.5 per cent of children within Barnsley are living in low-income families, and as at March 2022, 28.2 per cent of children in Barnsley are eligible for free school meals.

The diversity of our population continues to change. In 2011, four in every 100 people were from a black and minority ethnic (BME) group, significantly lower than the regional and national demographic picture. The January 2021 School Census² shows that 9.8 per cent of primary school pupils and 8.8 per cent of secondary school pupils are from black and minority ethnic origins, the same percentage for primary schools in January 2020 but an increase for secondary schools which reported 8.5 per cent in 2020, remaining below the regional and national averages.

¹ Revised mid-year (2020) population estimates, released by ONS in June 2021.

² January 2020 School Census analysis not yet available at the time of writing, due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic.

In Barnsley, at the 2021/22 year-end outturn there were:

- **3,177** children with an Early Help support plan.
- **1,654** children with a Child in Need (CIN) episode
- **279** children with a child protection plan (CPP)
- **350** children in care (CIC)
- **89** care experienced young people
- **2,133** children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- **96 (4.5 per cent)** of children with an EHCP children are accessing support in Barnsley schools
- **10.9%** of school aged children are receiving SEND support without the need for an EHCP

What do we mean by Early Help for Children, Young People and Families?

Early Help is the term used in Barnsley to describe our approach on a whole range of individual social, health and educational issues when providing support to children, young people and their families as soon as problems emerge or re-emerge.

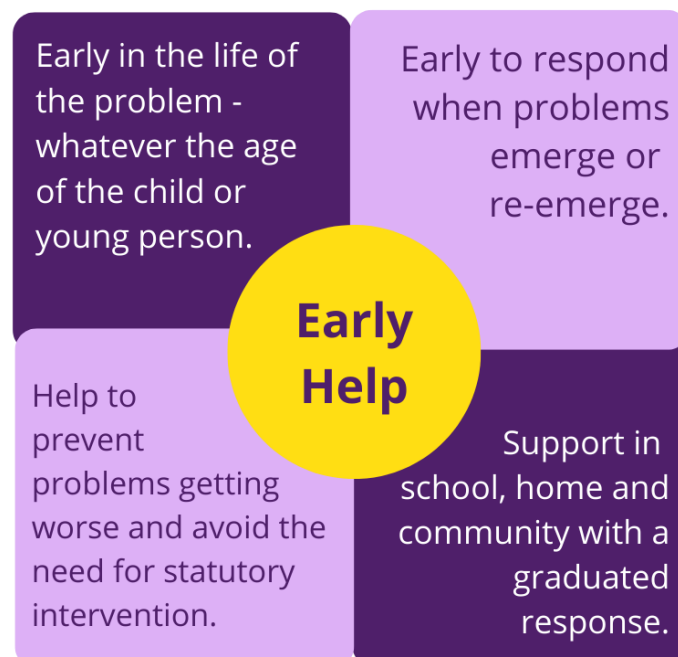
Early Help can be provided through a single agency or multi-agency responses appropriate to the needs of the child and family and the concern. However, where more than one agency or partner are identified as needing to work with the family, an Early Help Assessment should be undertaken to ensure that a single plan can be pulled together to ensure that everyone is clear on who is providing what support to the family.

Intervening as early as possible, regardless of the age of the child or young person, can positively improve their outcomes. Early Help is a collaborative approach which relies on local agencies working together effectively with families to identify who needs help and then to meet their varied needs.

Excellent work with families already takes place across Barnsley, day in and day out, by schools, health services, family centres and early years settings, services provided or commissioned through our voluntary and community sector, and a range of other agencies and services.

Our Early Help approach includes our commitment to shifting the balance of power so that our work is family led and not led by practitioners.

The Barnsley Early Help approach in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 also includes proactive and planned support for those children and young people stepping down from statutory social work interventions and specialist care or services.



The Barnsley Early Help approach

Barnsley's Early Help approach to providing support to potentially vulnerable children, young people, and their families as soon as problems start to emerge - a collaborative approach, not a provision.

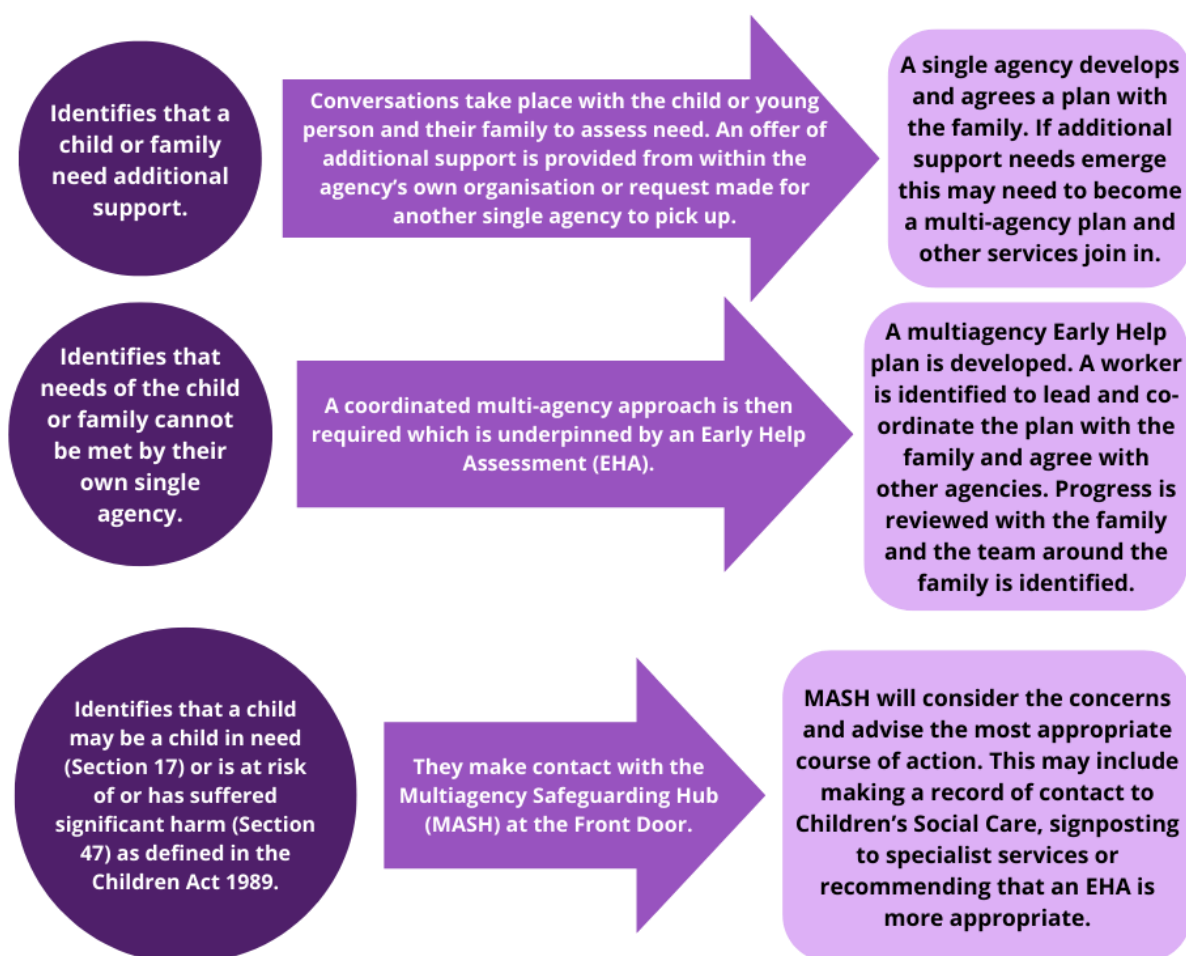
Right support, right place, right time

Our approach to Early Help is to focus on regular conversations with children, young people and families and people who can offer support and help, to jointly assess what help is required. Through regular meetings and collaborative conversations between the family and team around them, circumstances and progress can be reviewed and plans adjusted to meet changing needs. For children and young people to receive the right service at the right time, conversations need to be constructive and strengths based - going beyond a discussion about concerns, to form part of a meaningful assessment utilising the Early Help Assessment and where appropriate, a whole family plan developed to support the child, young people and their families. It is vital that children and families are at the centre of any assessment and plans and that their voice, wishes and feelings are heard and clearly present in any plans. This approach supports families to develop their resilience and achieve the best possible outcomes in the longer term through developing strategies for self-help.

How we put Early Help into practice

It is everybody's responsibility to identify and assess need, through having conversations with children young people and their families and planning with them to address these needs. Our Early Help approach is underpinned by the framework of **Assess, Plan, Do** and **Review**. The following shows how we work when addressing social care needs. A similar approach is used when meeting educational needs as part our of graduated response.

Early Help graduated approach – for anyone working with children, young people and families



Our commitment – ‘Early Help is everybody’s responsibility’

Barnsley benefits from successful, and longstanding multi-agency working across the diverse and rich partnership in the town. The Barnsley Trust Executive Group is committed to providing the support that children, young people and their families need, as soon as they need it, when and where they need it and by the people who are best placed to help. Early Help is a collaboration between Children’s and Young People’s trust partners and the wide range of organisations who work with children and families. Early Help services should be seen as a flexible continuum of support ranging from universal services through to statutory or specialist provision, all of which are focussed on improving the lives of children young people and families. Children, young people and their families may experience a range of different needs at different times and as such will move backwards and forwards through the continuum as needs are met.

The delivery of our Early Help strategy is based on a joint commitment to shared outcomes, which will evidence the impact we make for families by intervening early and providing the right support at the right time in the right place, enabling sustainable outcomes and building family resilience. We cannot achieve change without the full commitment of families and all agencies and organisations who are supporting them to make changes. Effective Early Help relies upon local organisations and agencies such as health professionals, police, fire and rescue, schools and colleges, childminders, nurseries, housing, social workers, and CAMHS working together to:

- Identify children and families who would benefit from Early Help
- Undertake an assessment of the need for Early Help
- Provide targeted Early Help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to improve the outcomes for the child

Everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play. This may be as simple as asking if people have heard about Early Help when coming into contact with a member of the public, through to a full-scale assessment of need.

It is important that all practitioners, including those in wider council and partner services, delivering universal services and those providing services to adults with children, understand their role in identifying emerging problems, assessing need, and raising awareness and sharing information with other practitioners and families and children to support early identification and assessment in a multi-agency context.

A critical factor for successfully meeting needs is the commitment of individuals and families to make changes in their lives with our support.

Early Help provides support for those children, young people and families at risk of poor outcomes. All our work is child and family-centred, consent-based and focussed on working collaboratively with families to overcome the issues they face, build their resilience and leave them better able to manage future challenges. Families who may require Early Help are identified by a wide range of practitioners, in many different ways, for example:

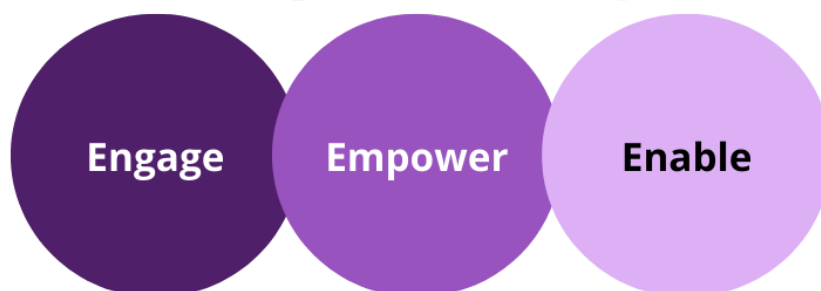
- A midwife identifies concerns about a lack of support for a teenager who is pregnant and is reporting that they are struggling with their emotional health and scared they won’t be able to cope with a baby
- A health visitor sees a family finding it difficult adapting to a new baby at home and has concerns about attachment between mum and baby
- A member of school staff observes that a child may have behavioural or emotional issues and is often at school early and is reluctant to go home
- A school meals assistant notices a child is always hungrier than their peers and always asks for more food
- An Education Welfare officer identifies a young person’s persistent absence from school, or has concerns about a family’s support needs where their child is electively home educated.
- A detached youth worker is worried that a young person may be putting themselves at greater risk of offending or entering the criminal justice system
- An employment adviser is concerned that a parent may be subject to a benefit sanction

- A housing officer notices a family struggling with debt and at risk of eviction
- A drug or alcohol worker feels that children in the family home may be vulnerable through the risk-taking behaviour of adults
- A social worker feels there is a need for additional support for a child even though there are no child protection concerns as part of a step-down plan
- A youth justice worker is concerned that a young person is at risk of sexual exploitation
- A General Practitioner recognises that a child is struggling to cope with his/her parent's separation
- A probation officer identifies that an individual, with children, may be having problems settling back into their family home following their release from custody
- A customer services call handler has a conversation with a member of the public who is struggling to manage their household budget
- A workman overhears a parent shouting at their child, and they are clearly struggling to cope with their child's behaviour

All agencies undertake early help as part of our 'day job' whether having an initial conversation (have you heard about), providing a single agency response, acting as a lead professional or participating in a multi-agency team around the family to undertake an Early Help Assessment; and working to provide help and support to those who need it in a way that makes sense for the whole family.

The three E's

Early Help is everyone's responsibility



Listening to and championing the voice of children and young people



Engage: Relationships are key to effective Early Help and the quality of relationships can significantly impact on the success of the work we do together. We are committed to developing positive and trusting relationships based on honest and open conversations built upon children, young people and families' strengths. Getting the right people involved is crucial and it is important that families feel supported in their journey.

Early Help is based upon consent and we will work with families empowering them to make informed choices to engage in Early Help. Families should be enabled and supported to access the right support, with the right people and at the right time around their needs or concerns, so that needs can be addressed as soon as possible avoiding the need for statutory interventions such as social care involvement further down the line.

Empower: Families are well placed to identify the things they are struggling with and should be at the centre of the assessment. We will listen to all voices within the family and build a plan with the child and family in the driving seat. Early Help is not about doing to or for our families it is about developing their confidence and skills so that they feel able to identify what they need and know how to ask for support or access it in the longer term. The plan should be led and owned by the family with the voice of the children and parents being heard, and shaping the response and action plan agreed. It's about others providing support to the family to make the changes they need to secure better outcomes, shifting the power base from workers to family and co-producing the action plan so that the actions are collectively owned in a family plan.

Enable: We will support families to come together to utilise their own resources and strengths to overcome challenges. This will mean that we expect families to take responsibility for actions on their plan alongside others who can support them. Once families are empowered to lead their own action plan and are involved in reflecting on progress made and barriers this will support them to be in a stronger position to identify when needs merge in future and to take appropriate action and seek support at the earliest opportunity if they need help. Families will become more resilient and more able to support their wider family friends and community in addressing their needs. Therefore, in the longer-term families will need to access Early Help services less as they will be able to identify when they need help and will be empowered and enabled to access support or self-help.

Levels of support

Early Help responses are tailored to individual circumstances and needs. Some families or individuals may feel able to access support and services on their own if they have access to the right information and signposting.

Others may need to help from one or more professionals where support is best coordinated through a multi-agency Early Help assessment and plan.

Some families with more complex needs may need assessment and risk support, which is coordinated through Social Care, with other professionals also offering support as part of an overarching plan.

Early Help will mainly aim to support those who are getting advice, or moving from getting more help or getting risk support.



What people say about Early Help

Children, young people and families told us about what Early Help should be:

"Support needs to be given earlier when it's needed which will help young people in crisis"

"Young people should be able to come face to face with the professionals and hold them to account"

"Young people don't know where to turn to, to access the early help or are too ashamed to access it because of the stigma associated with it"

"We need to make options available to young people better known so I know what choices I have"

"Easily accessible quick resources for families in time of need"

"More local community options to make it easier for everyone"

"There needs more positive support work in and around schools for young people"

"It should be easy to understand for families, not scary and it should be supportive"

"Support from someone approachable and understanding that can support both parents and children"

"It should be early....earlier intervention would have been beneficial"

"A lot of stuff is virtual at the minute which is rubbish for me, and I get that it has to be but that's not great for lots of young people"

The following link gives an example of how Early Help has supported a local family through a time of need: [Early Help case study video](#).

Children, young people and families told us that we will know we are getting Early Help right because:

People feel supported and there's less need for early help

Less need for early help services

Involving them and including them in the design and delivery of the service by putting them first is really important

Feedback from families...things get better....don't need support anymore

Some of it is measurable - referrals etc. but quantifying happiness is very hard

If there's good public awareness that it is there if its needed

Everyone's experiences and outcomes are going to be different

That support is given when it's needed without having to jump through lots of different evidence hoops, even when proof has been established

If the family gets on better

Will see results and progress

Positive outcomes

People need to know about what's on offer and where it is, when its open

Worker is helping me

When children start attending school

To help you access the services you need at the right time for the right support

Children, young people and families told us how they feel Early Help has or can impact positively on outcomes:

The right worker/team supports you through a downward dip

Finding the right support for me is what has helped me through difficult times, and I am very grateful for that.

Makes family life more pleasant and helps children develop more positively

Helps parents to have more confidence in their parenting abilities having a positive impact on children

Give both us and our children the tools to deal with the problems they are having

Get support needed to succeed at home and school, support their health and mental health as well as behaviour

Strategic Priorities

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) uses data and information from various sources and related plans and strategies. This information can be found through this link: [JSNA summary data](#). A combined understanding of this intelligence data has helped underpin our understanding of local needs and the setting of our priorities.

Our priorities have also been informed by several sources of information such as Community Early Help Delivery Groups and the Best Start for Life Partnership along with feedback from young people's groups and various case studies in respect of actions in place supporting children, young people and their families to become independent, resilient, and stronger in managing their health and well-being ensuring the best start for life.

Our strategic priorities are:



Strategic priority 1:

The right help, in the right place at the right time.

This means that:

- Children, young people and families in Barnsley will know what advice and support is available to them to help them respond to problems or needs arising due to their changing circumstances.
- Children, young people and families will know where and who to go to for support and what to expect.
- Children, young people and families will be able to deal with issues or problems before they become more severe or complicated. They will be helped to be independent and resilient enough to support themselves safely in the longer term.
- Families will be able to access the right services at the right time and have access to good quality information, evidence-based services and support.

Strategic priority 2:

A whole system approach to Early Help with strong partnership working and system leadership.

This means that:

- Early Help partners will work together to minimise duplication, share knowledge about services available, and make sure that people who need more help don't fall through gaps.
- There will be no wrong door for people who need to access advice and support.
- Intelligence and insight will be available to help services to effectively target and co-ordinate early intervention, inform service delivery, support demand management and monitor performance.
- The children and young people's workforce will be well equipped with the appropriate skills, resources, and confidence to deliver effective Early Help.
- Ensuring that children young people and families can access the right services at the right time without delay will be everyone's responsibility.
- Early Help will be embedded across all partners services and aligned with other key strategies including neglect, Child exploitation, and poverty.
- All partners will utilise the universal Early Help Assessment to gain a holistic understanding of need and will participate in undertaking Early Help Assessments including fulfilling the role of Lead Professional.
- All partners will provide oversight to their own agencies work within the Early Help System to identify and address any weakness in practice.

Strategic Priority 3:

Empowering local people and communities to build capacity and resilience, helping people and communities to do more for themselves.

This means that:

- Children, young people and families will feel supported and have the information they need and confidence to seek support services when needed.
- Children, young people and families will achieve better outcomes and will experience effective transitions across ages and stages and also between Children's and Adults services.
- Children, young people, and their families will be able to access the right services digitally at the right time.
- Children, young people and families will be heard, and their views and feedback will shape the intervention they receive and wider service delivery.

Making It happen

Implementation of the Children and Young People’s Early Help Strategy will be detailed in an Early Help Steering Group Delivery plan which will be continually refreshed during the life of this strategy (2022 -2027). This will be a dynamic plan which will be reviewed and updated on a quarterly basis to ensure that it is able to adapt to the pace of progress, as well as new developments, research and opportunities. This should be read alongside the Adults Early Help Adults Plan and associated action plan.

We have identified the following enablers as critical elements to our success in line with our priorities to achieve our strategic aims.



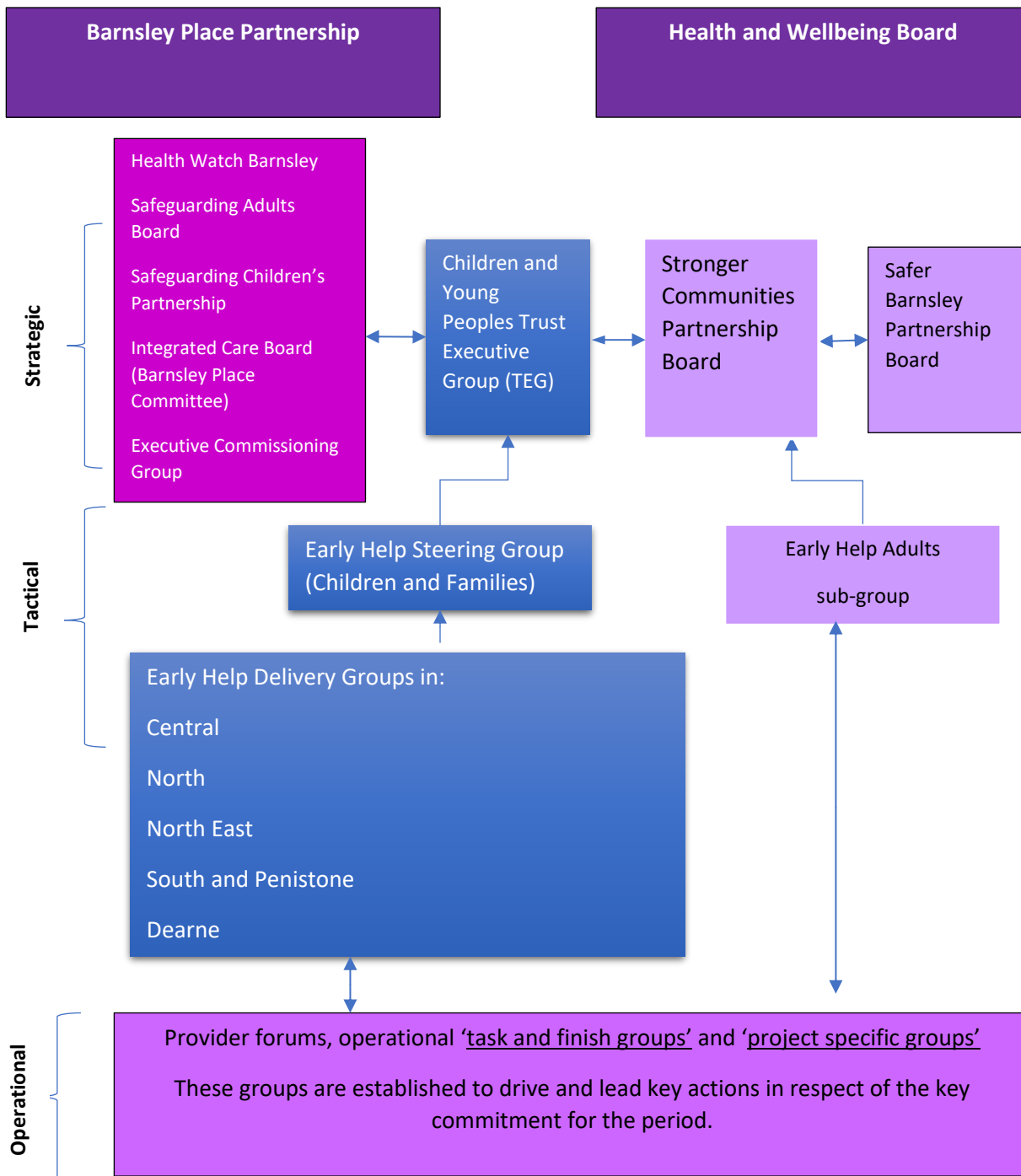
Governance

Our focus is on targeting our resources appropriately in accordance with identified needs, thereby helping us to achieve the best outcomes for and in partnership with local people and communities.

Early Help is a system wide approach.

Now more than ever there’s a need to pool our resources across sectors acknowledging that strong and resilient communities will form the solid foundations to the successful delivery of this strategy.

The Governance structure illustrates how partnership across the children sector will oversee delivery and maintain accountability.



Key indicators and performance

It is important that measures of success are established and agreed. The following outcome indicators will demonstrate the effectiveness of the strategy and its implementation:

1. Increase in the number of families supported through a multi-agency early help plan
2. Number of families making progress against the goals in their early help plan
3. Number of families who are satisfied with the support they receive
4. Number of families accessing targeted early help support
5. Reduction in the number of statutory social work assessments which result in closure
6. Reduction in the number of families subject to child in need plans
7. Reduction of contacts to the front door – meaning that families are supported by those who already know them
8. Number of parents and professionals trained in parent led parenting programmes
9. Number of multi-agency practitioners trained in understanding parental conflict
10. Number of multi-agency practitioners trained in Barnsley Early Help related courses
11. Number of multi-agency practitioners trained in use of the Graded Care Profile
12. Increase in the number of early help plans in place at the time of a request for an Education Health Care needs assessment
13. Reduction in the number of Education Health Care Plan needs assessment requests by parents

Contact us

Early Help for Children Young People and Families

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