



# **BCP Early Help, Family Support and Young People's Strategy 2020-2023**

*Caring for our children and young people; providing a nurturing environment, high quality education and opportunities to grow and flourish*

## **Introduction**

BCP is committed to delivering effective services that ensure children and young people feel safe and secure within a stable family. We take pride in our journey so far, with much achieved in such a brief period. We recognise there remain several key challenges and areas for improvement to become an outstanding place for all children and young people to thrive, to have bright futures and fulfilled lives, and where they are supported by the whole community to succeed. This strategy outlines a range of initiatives aimed at offering Early Help to parents /carers and their children, so that we can deliver on our ambition of *Brighter Futures* as set out within the BCP Corporate Plan.

Being a new authority has provided an opportunity to consider how, as an authority, we can work with partners to improve outcomes for children and young people at the earliest possible time. To develop the new strategic approach for BCP Council we undertook a system wide consultation with over 400 professionals from across health, police, education and the voluntary and community sector during the Summer of 2019. We have also listened to families and young people who have accessed support through children's centres, schools, youth services, and health services.

The strategy forms a framework within which a continuum of support will be provided, brokered and mobilised with and around children, young people and their families at different times in their lives. Across the BCP conurbation and communities, the strategy seeks to provide coherence to the current range of effective, evidence-based services already in place, which address needs early either in universal services or as part of targeted and specialist support and intervention.

The strategy aligns pieces of work in development or established across the new partnership including: THRIVE in Dorset Children and Young People's Local Transformation Plan and the Healthy Child Programme, with a view to reducing duplication and using our collective resources to best effect. The strategy also aligns to a number of established and related strategies including: The Domestic Abuse Strategy; The Pan Dorset Neglect Strategy; The Pan Dorset Child

Exploitation (CSE, Missing, Criminal Exploitation) Strategy; the BCP SEND and Inclusion strategy, the Youth Offending Strategy and the Prevent Strategy<sup>1</sup>.

As well as achieving coherence and harmonisation across the communities that make up BCP, this strategy also seeks to address areas of unmet need and gaps in provision across the BCP conurbation area.

## Overview

Our ambition is to ensure children and families can get the right help at the right time. As *Working Together 2018* states, organisations supporting children should have in place effective ways to identify both emerging vulnerabilities and the unmet needs of individual children and families. This requires all practitioners, including those in universal services and those providing services to adults with children, to understand their role in identifying emerging problems and to share information with other practitioners to support early identification, assessment and intervention.

At the very heart of this aspiration, is the knowledge that in the main, families can meet all of their children's needs with the support of universal services, while for those children with additional needs, families have the capacity to effect positive changes with targeted intervention and support from the different services that are available. Offering support early and effectively, requires a strong commitment to relationship-based ways of working and with this, the ability and capacity to form strong partnerships between practitioners and families.

Our collaborative approach to working with the voluntary, community and faith sectors and our partnership with health, education, police, community safety and all other organisations who work with children, young people and families, is detailed within this document. A BCP strategic leaders' group and other formal partnerships will convert this strategy into operational activity, with wider strategic oversight provided through the Pan Dorset Safeguarding Partnership, BCP Community Safety partnership and BCP Learning partnership.

## What do we mean by early help and early intervention?

*'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.'*

(Working Together to Safeguard Children, HM Government July 2018)

Resilient children, families and communities can bounce back and thrive despite the challenges they face. Most children and young people's needs are met by their family or universal services, that is those services that are available to everyone. There is also research illustrating that intervening as early as possible pays off, early in the life of a child and early in the life of a problem. Although research shows that the most impact can be made during a child's early years, early help is not just for very young children, as needs and risks may emerge at any point throughout childhood and adolescence.

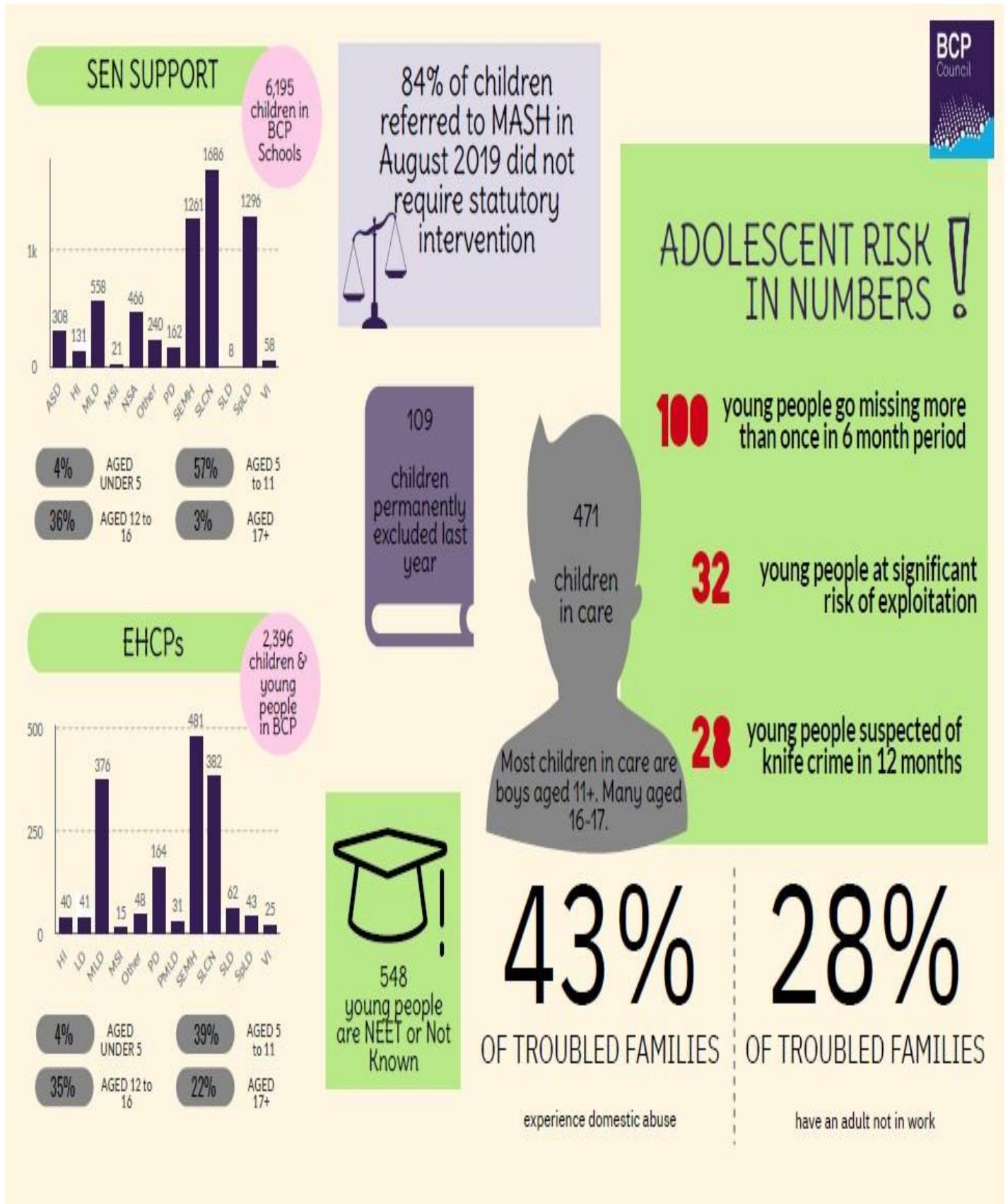
We recognise that the day to day experience of our young people can involve living, learning and negotiating transitions to adulthood and independence in an increasingly complex and challenging world, in which they face greater levels of choice and opportunity, and with this uncertainty and

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<sup>1</sup> Alongside key national policy documents including Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018; and regulatory frameworks.

risk. The research clearly demonstrates that parents/carers, schools and organisations working with young people need to adopt forward-thinking intervention techniques to support and empower young people to stay safe and remain with their family.

**Table 1: An overview of need experienced by children and families across BCP**



The objectives of this strategy are to:

- provide the right help and support to children and families as early as possible and at the right time
- build resilience in families
- develop and provide innovative ways to support readiness for school across each phase
- reduce risks for our young people who are identified as being at risk of going missing and or of child exploitation

**The success of this strategy will be measured through a series of proxy measures, which include:**

- improved levels of school attendance and a reduction in fixed term and permanent exclusions, particularly for vulnerable children and young people
- improved awareness of, and response to the exploitation of children, reflected in the timelines of return home interviews for children missing within 24 hours
- improvements in the quality, quantity and timeliness of assessments and plans for those children identified as at risk of exploitation
- a reduction in the number of reoccurrences of children going missing from home or care
- a reduction in numbers of young people over the age of 13 entering public care
- a reduction in the number of children and young people entering the criminal justice system
- a reduction in numbers of young people not actively engaged in education employment or training (or where this is not known)
- the range and quality of feedback from young people and families to shape and support service improvements
- a reduction in the number of contacts or assessments with no further action, leading to a reduction in repeat referrals
- an increase in the number of early help assessments, which suggest that emerging needs are being identified and responded to at the earliest opportunity
- an increase in the number of early help plans, which demonstrate positive impact for children and families

## The Strategy

We believe that:

- relationships are at the heart of good practice;
- children and young people in the main do best living within their family networks; • positive change can happen and that
- as professionals we are enablers.

We are clear, however, that a relationship-based model of practice works well for families as well as practitioners and that our investment in and support for our workforce is as important as the approach and evidenced-based interventions we deliver in supporting families. Our ambition is to work or enable those who are working alongside children and families requiring early help, SEND services, statutory social work and youth offending services to support parents and guardians, to care for their children well.

Our practice model, *Signs of Safety*, provides a context in which good early help and family support can flourish, making a positive difference to the children and families we work with. The Signs of Safety practice model focuses on those in positions of authority doing things with people, rather than for or to them, showing high levels of support and challenge while always keeping the child at the centre. Signs of Safety provides practitioners and family members with the confidence to use consistent language, behaviours and tools to strengthen their relationships with children, young people and families. This includes a commitment to enabling families and practitioners to work together using a solution focused approach, leading to positive change and where necessary protective action in a way that is meaningful and timely for children.



The Signs of Safety practice model will help us deliver our vision and adhere to our values. Our aim is that it will be welcomed and supported by our partners and by the families we work with. Our core professional values and approach within the practice model are consistent with the values of the BCP People Strategy:

- Listen
- Trust
- Act
- Collaborate
- Aspire

## **The BCP Early Help, Family Support and Young People's Offer**

Our aim is for children and families to be confident and independent through their own personal resilience and the support of social networks. There will, however, be times when this is more difficult without intervention from different services. For those children and families who face more significant challenges and perhaps with multiple needs, targeted and specialist services can provide additional capacity and expertise to work with families to help them understand and address their needs, capitalise on their strengths, to give them the best chance of making a positive difference to their children's lives. At these times, children and families are entitled to support when they need it.

As part of the Pan Dorset Children's Safeguarding Partnership's continuum of need we express early help across two levels of need depending on levels of vulnerability and risk: universal plus (level 2) and partnership plus (level 3). For children whose needs and circumstances make them more vulnerable, a coordinated multi-disciplinary approach is usually best, based on an early help assessment, with a named lead professional, who will work closely with the child and family to ensure they receive all the support they require. The concept of lead professional is key, as they provide a single point of contact for the child and family, with responsibility for co-ordinating professionals in their support and intervention. Early help services are provided by a range of partners including the voluntary and community sector, DWP, health, education, early years settings and BCP Early Help, Family Support and Youth Services.

The consultation held over the summer enabled us to redesign our services and approach to children, young people and families, ensuring they are responsive to the needs that were articulated, that they are aligned with partner delivery programmes and focused both on meeting our statutory duties, addressing gaps in provision to children and targeting our resources to make the greatest impact.

Our offer includes the following:

### **Digital Information, Advice and Guidance**

BCP is committed to ensuring that wherever possible we provide information and advice digitally, so families can be signposted to services and can continue to support themselves wherever this is possible. Our Family Information Services Directory, Local Offer and Youth Directory will form a key part of the BCP digital platform. Alongside this, staff within our Family Hubs and Youth One Stop shops, will offer direct support for those who require additional advice or guidance to access the right service at the right time.

## Locality Networks

Our offer will be organised through locality networks. A family hub will sit at the heart of each network, ensuring we deliver on the need to work with whole families while retaining the essence of Children's Centre work and values (a 'think family' approach). The hubs will include services delivered by a variety of partners which are available to all (early years, health services, schools, voluntary sector, faith-based organisations, play and youth provision) and incorporate universal, targeted and specialist services including (but not limited to) primary mental health workers, communication therapists, play therapists, midwives, health visitors, school nurses, youth workers, educational psychologists, family support workers and commissioned providers such as Safer Families. The family hub offer will include:

- the delivery of BCP's statutory offer to early years providers;
- accessible, local family support (0-19 years), with a clear acknowledgement that children and families live in communities;
- face to face and digital information, advice and guidance;
- the delivery of the Ready Children and Ready Families programmes across BCP.
- the introduction of locality panels to support multi agency problem solving where early help plans for families are not having sufficient impact or where concerns are increasing;
- a system wide approach to workforce development will be established to ensure practitioners are confident and able to provide the very best support. It is anticipated that much of this training will be accessed via the BCP training programme, however, bespoke and tailored support will also be available where this be required;
- capacity building in universal settings and providers (i.e. schools, early years providers, voluntary and community sector) to support children and families earlier, when a need arises;
- capacity building in the community through the engagement of young leaders, community members and parents to volunteer, to become parent and community champions, as well as working alongside Children's Services to shape the services of the future. This will enable BCP to focus its expertise on children and families who are more vulnerable and require targeted and specialist intervention;
- Delivering on the Ready Voluntary Sector and Ready Workforce to ensure practitioners and volunteers are confident and skilled to support families.

### Ready Early Years

#### **Supporting Early Years Providers:**

Early Years graduated response to identify, assess and support SEN support needs

Roll-out of SEMH and language development programmes

Improve EYFSP outcomes for all children particularly those with SEND and those in receipt of free school meals.

Supporting for business models and quality environments in early years settings

Local authority nurseries as centres of excellence

### Ready Children

#### **Communication, Language and Literacy**

Elklan, Communication Friendly Settings, Wellcom Assessment, Bumps and Babes Storytime, Book Start, Come Talk with Me, incorporating Play, Learn and Talk. Signalong, Bilingual Beginnings, PEEP

#### **Mental Health and Emotional Well Being**

Starting Out incorporating Ready Steady Go, Trick Box, Relax Kids, PEEP

#### **Physical Development**

Healthy activity, play therapy

## Ready Families

**Create a home leaning environment that supports their child's learning and development.**

Gro Brain, Welcome to the World, Starting Out, Come Talk with Me, Elklan for parents, PEEP

**Create a safe, healthy and nurturing home environment.** (A shared priority with the Children's 0-19 Health Service Offer for 1001 days).

**Targeted Opportunities** for young, first time parents including those that are care experienced, parents of children with SEND, single parents, Dads. Outreach with groups including Gypsy, Roma and Travellers.

**Parenting programmes** such as Pattern Changing, Who's in Charge, Triple P will be available by referral and Early Help assessment, including victims of domestic abuse.



## Ready Workforce (Universal) & Community & Voluntary sector

**Information, Advice and Guidance.**

Awareness raising, training and development  
Toolkits, guidance, quality assurance and published resources  
Parent partners as volunteers, peer mentors, to plan and lead networks and develop employability skills

## Early Years Support

Our early years offer has been built on strong foundations developed through the preceding councils. The service supports 373 early years and childcare providers in the private, voluntary, independent and maintained sectors. The ambitions set out in the corporate plan can be realised through a range of initiatives including:

- embedding Signs of Safety and a graduated response approach across the early years' workforce
- improving Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes for all children, particularly those with SEND and those receiving free school meals;
- targeting team resources towards providers identified as requiring support to embed quality first teaching;
- providing robust statutory support for newly registered settings and those judged by Ofsted to be inadequate or requiring improvement.;
- targeting early years funding to develop the early years and childcare market in terms of increasing take up of places and improving quality, working within the boundaries of LA statutory guidance and in collaboration with the Quality and Commissioning Service.

## Ready Children and Ready Families (0-11 years)

These programmes are evidenced based and target specific areas of child and family development to support children and families with school readiness. They provide support and with this early intervention in the areas of speech language and communication, parenting support, home learning and behaviour management across the age range 0-11 years.

## Family Support (0 -19 years)

Our Family Support Team provides support to children (0-19 yrs.) and families experiencing difficulties, to ensure they get the help they need before problems become more serious. This team support children and families with needs that sit below the level requiring the involvement of Children's Social Care.

The team will operate from our family hubs as well as providing peripatetic support through satellite centres including schools, health provision and voluntary and community sector centres. They will work with families with children with more complex and often interacting needs and bring experience in lead professional and multi-agency working with families experiencing a range of challenges and children with diverse needs including (for e.g.) those with SEND, at risk of exploitation, school exclusion and non-attendance and offending.

The family support team will have a key role in supporting early help professionals across BCP to undertake high quality assessments, plans and reviews with a clear focus on impact.

## Locality Cluster Working

Through the family hubs, a locality cluster model of working will be introduced as outlined below:

- A series of local clusters involving a range of professionals will be developed across BCP. Clusters will include representatives from local partner agencies (for e.g.) voluntary and community organisations, schools/educational settings, early years providers, community health and GPs
- Each cluster will be coordinated by a team manager, who will convene a regular 'cluster' meeting. This will be an opportunity for partners within the cluster to access case consultancy where interventions that have been tried to date have not worked and where further support or a different approach is required to help the family move forward. As part of this, lead professionals will be able to access advice on which interventions would be appropriate to support a family to manage needs and prevent an escalation of risks.

This approach will strengthen partnership and build skills across the early help system, with a greater number of agencies feeling confident to take on lead professional responsibilities. In addition, that it will foster a network of local professionals to support families in their local community.

## The First Response Team

When a child's needs cannot be met in universal or early help services and where it is believed that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, practitioners must make a referral to our Children's Services First Response Hub. Our First Response Team operates as part of this Hub and provides an initial triage for all contacts coming into the safeguarding system. The First Response Team is supported by a team of early help professionals and offer consultancy and advice to all practitioners, who are unclear whether a child or family's needs can be met within universal services, targeted early help services or children's social care. The early help decision maker is ideally placed to identify themes emerging from the contacts coming into the system and



will identify organisations, requiring coaching and training to improve referrals and reduce failure demand.

## Young People's Offer: Preparing for Adulthood

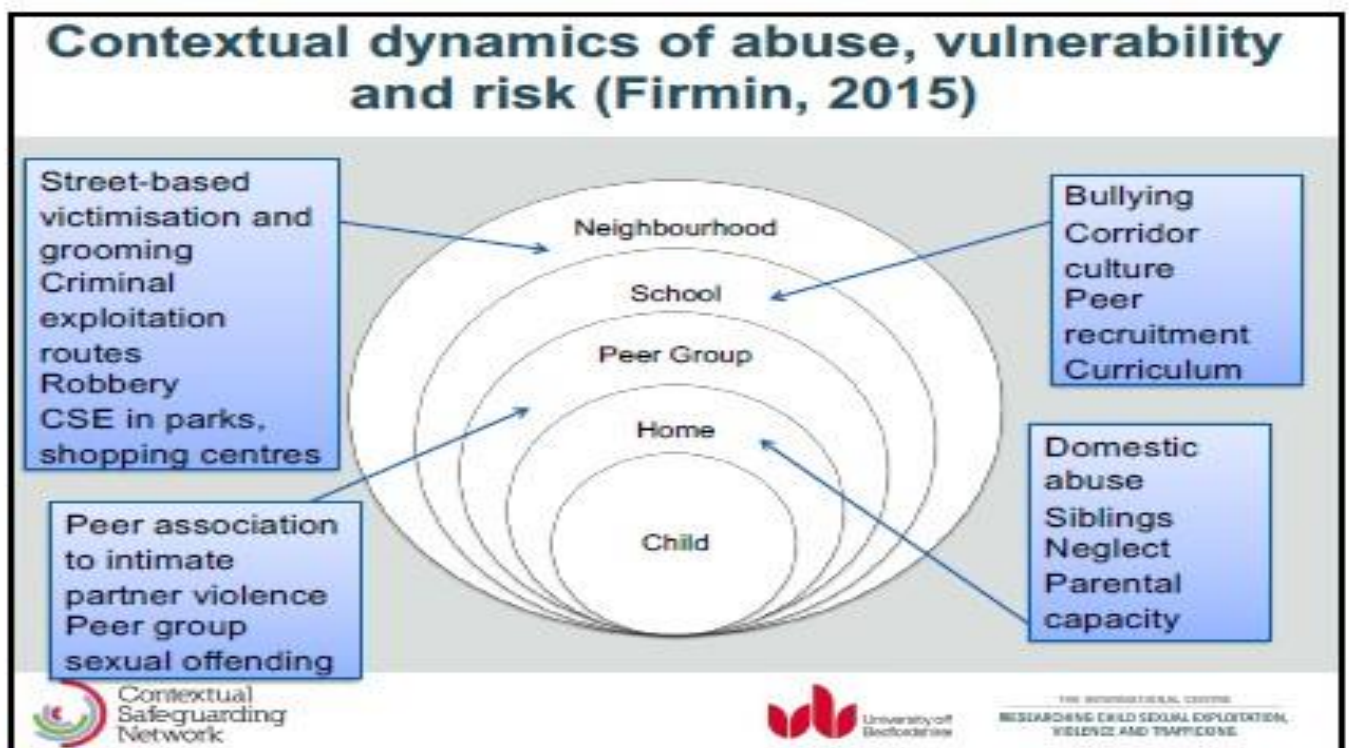
Young people are living, learning and negotiating transitions to adulthood and independence in an increasingly complex and challenging world, in which they face greater levels of choice and opportunity, but also uncertainty and risk.

Evidence indicates that developing social and emotional skills within young people supports their achievement of positive outcomes, including educational attainment, employment and health. Skills such as resilience, communication, and negotiation are also cited as being the foundations of employability.

It is also recognised that the different relationships that young people form in their neighborhoods, schools and online can be beyond parent/ carer influence, and a young people's ability to navigate these is very much rooted in how well developed their social and emotional capabilities are as well as friendships, stable relationships and positive attachments.

In working with young people, practitioners need to engage those who do have influence both within and external to family contexts, and recognise that an assessment of, and intervention with these are a critical part of supporting young people.

**Table 2: An overview of the different spheres of influence that can increase risk for young people both within and external to the family.**



The challenge for both families and practitioners is to connect all these 'spheres of influence', empowering young people to take an active role in achieving positive outcomes. BCP is committed to supporting young people to enjoy their teenage years and enabling them to become successful young adults. Our strategy looks to support young people to be prepared for adulthood.

To achieve this, research points to young people being part of a resilient family alongside access to positive activities, participation in civic society, having access to high quality information, advice and guidance, while benefitting from effective personal, social, health and emotional wellbeing programmes (PSHE).

For those young people, however, who experience more challenges and who may have multiple needs, targeted services provide additional capacity and expertise to support them and their family members to give them the best chance of making a successful transition into adulthood.

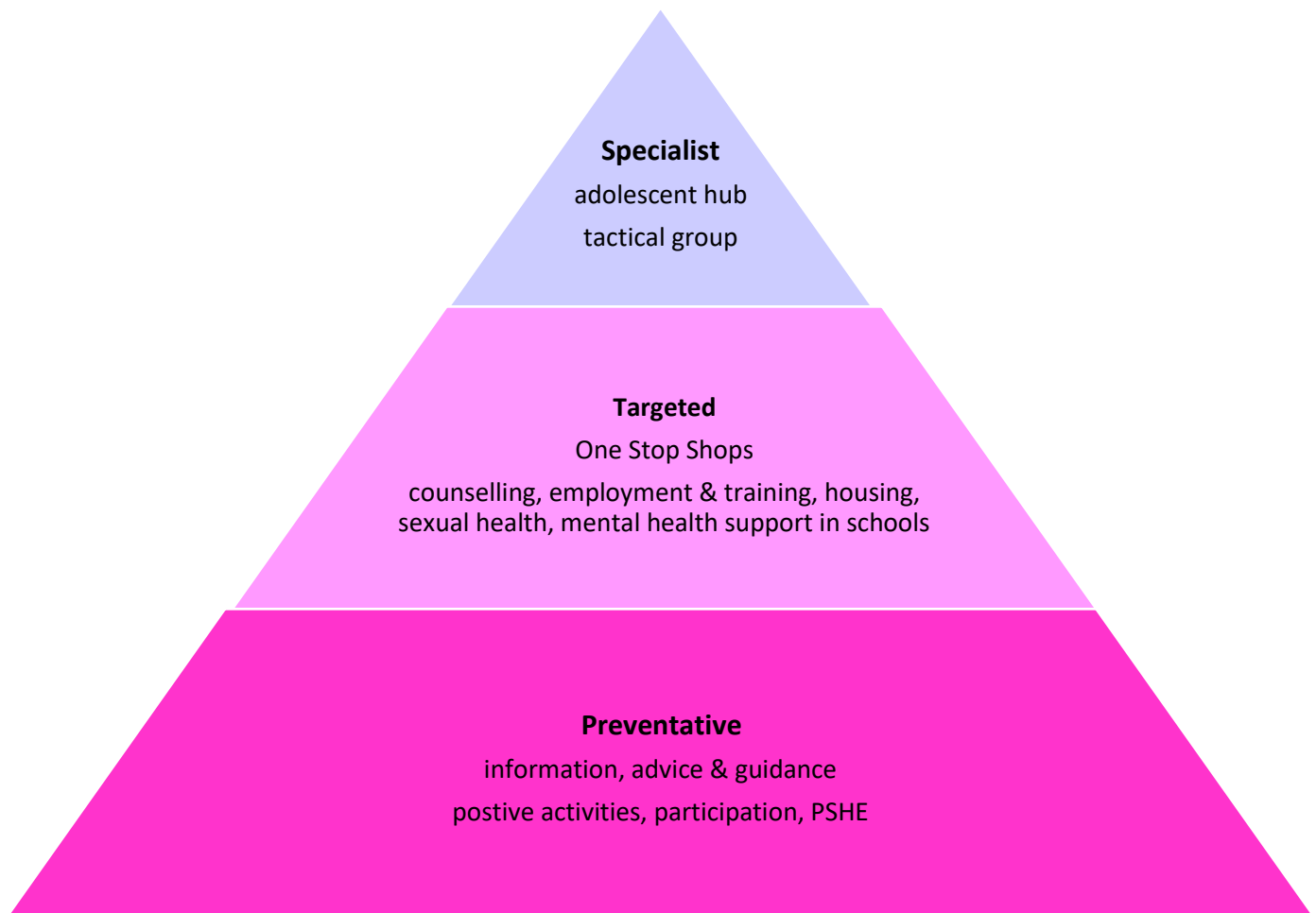
To achieve this, we will:

- work with the Learning Partnership to support the development and delivery of universal and targeted programmes in schools, that prioritise and promote personal resilience. This would include work undertaken via the PSHE curriculum;
- maintain our commitment to securing the voice and participation of all children, young people across BCP and using a range of approaches to achieve this;
- continue to deliver a positive programme of activities for young people across the Youth Centre network. As part of this, a clear understanding that the voluntary and community sector, with the support of qualified and experienced youth workers, may be better placed to deliver these activities in the future;
- continue to offer a one stop shop approach (Number 18 Poole, Sussed in West Howe and 507 in Boscombe) providing targeted services and support for young people. These include access to counselling, IAG on sexual health, housing and education, employment and training;
- strengthen our approach to supporting the inclusion of children in schools, with a particular focus on increasing school attendance and reducing school exclusion for the most vulnerable. This acknowledges the clear relationship that exists between children who are out of school and the risk of exploitation and high-risk behaviours;
- develop a BCP wide, multi-agency tactical group to identify and provide assertive outreach support to individuals, groups of individuals where there are known risks linked to exploitation;
- develop an adolescent hub, providing integrated, multi-disciplinary support to work with the most vulnerable young people in our community, to reduce risks and enable young people to achieve their potential.

In achieving the above:

- implement a BCP, multi-agency Child Exploitation delivery plan to maximise the benefits of partnership working across the safeguarding system, in particular when risks for young people exist outside of the family home.

**Table 3: A continuum of response for supporting young people across BCP**



### **Delivering Positive Activities**

We recognise the importance of positive activities in supporting young people to develop life skills, their talents and to achieve their aspirations.

Across BCP we have a vibrant voluntary youth provision, whether this is delivered within neighbourhoods, through sports and leisure interest groups and the uniformed youth services alongside informal education provision such as the National Citizen Service. We also recognise that to grow this voluntary sector offer BCP has a role to ensure that specialist services engage with groups to address any challenges when they arise, to support the voluntary, community and faith sectors to work with young people as they are moving through the challenges that they are facing. BCP Council's aims to develop and support the voluntary, community and faith sectors to develop good quality provision, by developing initiatives like a Youth Quality Mark across BCP VCS provision and a training and support programme. As part of the development of this model we will map the open access youth offer available locally and ensure this is available on the Youth Directory.

Over time, this will allow BCP to focus its sessional youth work programme on delivering positive activity programmes to young people with additional needs, SEND, and those who are excluded from school, on part time timetables, or who may live in our more disadvantaged communities.

### **Participation**

It is equally as important to develop the skills of our young people in civic society and we recognise the confidence and skill development that participation opportunities can bring. As a result, we are holding conversations with young people through school councils and youth forums

to design a new participation strategy that will be launched in 2020. This will explore (for e.g.) how we extend our school councils and their influence and engage in the UK Youth Parliament, to enable young people to actively design strategies, or be part of Elected Member boards such as Overview and Scrutiny or Corporate Parenting Board. We will support young people who would not typically engage in civic society, such as young offenders or young people with SEND.

## **PSHE**

Schools have a statutory role to deliver PHSE through the curriculum. We support this activity through specialised informal education provision that addresses child exploitation, online safety and Prevent through commissioned theatre groups, whole school programmes, our SENCO and Designated Safeguarding Leads Forum as well as information and support via the Health and Wellbeing Board, Safeguarding Partnership, Community Safety Partnership and our wider strategic group to address issues of exploitation.

## **One Stop Shops**

Our One Stop Shops provide a single access point for young people to targeted services, these are currently sited at Number 18 Poole, Sussed in West Howe and 507 in Boscombe. These include counselling, sexual health, housing advice and education, employment and training information, advice and guidance for young people. The One Stop Shops operate on a self-referral and referral basis and are young people led. Young people have access to lead professionals and teams wrapping around families and young people to reduce risk, via Early Help. Our specialist adolescent support workers will also reach into secondary schools to support early intervention with young people at risk of becoming NEET (not engaged in education, employment or training).

## **Supporting Inclusion in Schools**

Our Inclusion offer looks to ensure that our schools are effectively supporting our most vulnerable children and young people at risk of missing out on education, exclusion or persistent absence. This service is school facing, meeting statutory inclusion duties and ensures that children and young people are supported to stay in or reintegrate into school, or engage in quality alternative provision. The service works in partnership with the Family, Youth and the Early Help services which provide both one to one interventions and group work. In meeting our statutory duties, we also seek to ensure that those electively home educated are receiving appropriate education and those engaged in performing arts and sports are licensed to do so.

## **An Adolescent Hub**

An adolescent hub will offer integrated services and support for young people who are either in care or who are edging to care, which will overlap with young people being supported via early help teams.

Edging to care is defined as when, without an intervention package being put in place, there is a strong likelihood of children and young people being at imminent risk of becoming looked after and their needs are escalating. In North Yorkshire 355 young people were supported through a similar hub model between April 2015 and March 2017, the average intervention time was 3 months. 86% of young people referred to the hub continued to remain out of the care system.

The hub will provide an integrated team to support the young person throughout their journey to ensure that they are not passed from service to service but instead are supported by a dedicated team. The integrated team is multi agency and agile and will include (for e.g.) access to CAMHS, sexual health, speech and language, drugs and alcohol, youth offending, youth workers, social workers, police and community safety staff.

Young people will be supported by outreach from the hub while either living with their families, in foster care or other accommodation arrangement. Central to the hub model, is the requirement for all staff to be trained in Signs of Safety, and restorative and solution-focused approaches.

A tactical group that works out of the hub will reach into place-based touch points such as the Poole Bus station and the Bournemouth Gardens, but also emerging areas of concern. In partnership with the Community Safety team and Police they will reach into schools to work with young people identified as missing, or at risk of radicalisation, or exploitation through sexual abuse or criminal activity (including county lines). They will operate both in the daytime and evening as the need arises.

The team will also be deployed at the BCP front door. When young people are edging into care, hub team members will add value to the social worker holding the case, not replacing their work. The essence of this work is trusted relationships provided by a single keyworker. Wherever possible, one worker will walk alongside the young person until risks and vulnerability have reduced.

## **Strong Social Work**

Collaboration, partnerships and relationships are all central to effective social work practice. The Social Work section, provides a statutory social work service to support children, families and help parents to care for their children in line with Working Together 2018. We firmly believe that it is a child's right to a family life. This means we will work with our children's family and friends to help them do their best for all our children. We strongly believe that children belong in natural networks with people they know and who will love them and keep them safe. Our service is child centred, family led, evidence based, risk sensible, focused and purposeful. We will build on and utilise a range of approaches including:

- redesigning the social work teams to enable relationships to be built and sustained between workers and children and families
- building capacity to invest in the Early Help system to support practitioners in their work with families
- ensuring the right skills and support is in place for social workers to be effective and resilient in their work and the amount of work allocated to social workers enables meaningful social work
  - extending the family finding approaches
- investing in restorative skill development
- extending the family group conferencing models using the Family Rights model,
- supporting our Parental Substance Misuse Court (PSMC) providing interventions for families where legal proceedings are underway due to parents with drug and alcohol abuse,
- extending the capacity and reach of our partnership with 'Safer Families' to benefit children who are at risk of harm

We expect all practitioners and managers to prioritise this value, and to help and support children have safe permanent relationships as a basic entitlement. The signs of safety approach emphasise the need to foster open, honest and respectful relationships with families. This means social workers and other professionals have to have difficult conversations with families. When children cannot remain safely at home with their parents, purposeful action is taken so that they live somewhere safe, within their network or with Local Authority carers. If it is not possible for children to return home, suitable and timely plans for permanence are made for them to live away from the family home.

Our service is child centred, family led, evidence based, risk sensible, focused and purposeful.