# Supporting Families - Early Help System Guide

## Purpose of This Guide

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The Early Help System is not a single service. It is a network of services, processes and interactions that aim to help children, young people and families at the earliest opportunity. Improving this system requires clarity of what success looks like, shared across a range of partners, and informed by the voices of managers, practitioners and families.

This is the second iteration of The Early Help System Guide. This second version outlines a national vision and descriptors for a mature Early Help System that is shared by DLUHC and DfE. It has been widely consulted upon across other government departments and local areas and is based on what is working around the country. It is a living tool that will adapt as new and better ideas are implemented.

The Guide is intended for the local strategic partnership responsible for the Early Help System. It aims to provide a framework for local workshops, partnership conversations and strategic planning and to support prioritisation. The Guide provides a self-assessment tool to support discussion, reflection and action planning against key areas that influence the effectiveness of Early Help. It does not dictate what needs to be done; but is a dynamic tool designed to focus the system on common goals, and progress towards these. Your reflections with partners and communities on the Early Help System Guide should lead to an improved local early help strategy which, in turn, will help your local partnership improve families' outcomes and reduce demand on acute services.

The Guide is designed to help you use local and research evidence to deliver an effective approach to early help. It asks you to consider what organisational and community data you use to understand your current position, as well as which evidenced-based interventions and practices you use to support families across the partnership.

## Background and Context

This Guide has been produced by the national Supporting Families programme (formerly the Troubled Families programme) within the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in partnership with the Department for Education.

Since 2012, the programme has been supporting and challenging local areas to transform services and systems to achieve significant and sustained outcomes for families facing complex challenges and problems. The programme promotes a whole family approach and has been evaluated as successful in improving outcomes. The programme invests significant resource into local areas in order to support the transformation this Guide sets out.

The Supporting Families programme places a specific expectation on all areas to use the Guide to self-assess the maturity of the Early Help System and to identify priority descriptors to work towards. More detail on this can be found in the Supporting Families programme Guidance.

## System transformation: Supporting Families, Family Hubs and Start for Life

During the budget 2021, the Government announced increased investment in the Supporting Families programme alongside new investment to transform Start for Life and family help services by creating a network of Family Hubs, investing in tailored breastfeeding services, infant and parent mental health, parenting programmes, and establishing a clear Start for Life Offer in half of upper tier local authorities.

Supporting Families drives high standards of continual improvements to local partnership working and data use, while funding intensive keywork support for those families facing multiple complex problems. Family Hubs are one way of delivering the Supporting Families vision of an effective early help system.

Where Family Hubs exist, they provide a single access point – a 'front door' – to universal and early help services for families with children of all ages (0-19) or up to 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with a great Start for Life offer at their core. Family Hubs involve co–location of services and professionals to make it easier for families to access the services they need, including Start for Life services, and this can include both physical locations, outreach support and virtual offers. Many services offered in a Family Hub network will be for families who do not need intensive, whole–family Lead Practitioner support; however, hubs will ensure seamless access to a whole–family Lead Practitioner where needed.

Supporting Families' outcomes align with the Best Start for Life vision of achieving good early years outcomes for babies and young children, and practitioners, services and families all benefit from expanded core services which ensure that children have the best possible start in life.

Many local authorities have already adopted hubs as their leading model of delivery with the help of Supporting Families funding. These programmes can be entirely complementary and together they form a strengthened local family help and support offer, led by the Department for Education, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Department for Health and Social Care working in close partnership across government.

## How to use this Guide

This guide provides the key descriptors of a mature Early Help System. It is a self-assessment and planning tool, the outcome of which should lead to a clearer and shared understanding of the current maturity of the Early Help System in an area and what steps need to be taken to progress. This could form the basis of a refreshed Early Help Strategy in a local area and a plan for implementation.

The guide contains:

| Contents | Description | Section |
|---|---|---|
| The Early Help vision | A summary of our vision for the Early Help System of support for families. | Section 1 |
| The Early Help system | A diagram demonstrating which services have a role to play in the Early Help System. | Section 2 |
| The workforce table | A table which defines the likely role of different types of practitioners from different agencies in the Early Help System. The contents of this table were developed with local areas and relevant Government Departments. | Section 3 |
| The self-assessment scoring system | An outline of how to use the 0-5 scoring framework. | Section 4 |
| The self-assessment descriptors | Structured as five sections focussing on family voice and experience, workforce, communities, leaders and data. | Section 5-9 |

## Conducting a self-assessment

There are a number of different ways the self-assessment can be conducted:

**1. A series of multi-agency workshops –** using the themes in the guide as a structure, workshops could explore different perspectives on what is working well and what needs to improve linked to each descriptor. Evidence from family feedback along with population, cohort and family level outcome measures should be used to inform discussion.

**2. Individual interviews with stakeholders from different agencies and services –** this approach could yield more insightful responses from individual stakeholders, the results of which could be used to draft the self-assessment with stakeholders, or used as one of the evidence sources for a multi- agency workshop.

**3. Peer review –** a number of stakeholders from 2 areas may wish to work together to complete the self-assessment to enable benchmarking and comparison of activity and progress.

The Guide can be used by any partnership to assess and plan for maturity in the Early Help System.

# 1. The Early Help vision

**The Early Help vision (Plain Text)**

Early Help is the total support that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse.

**Family voice and experience**
1. There are well established mechanisms to gather and act on feedback from families and engage people with lived experience in service design, governance and quality assurance.
2. Families say they know how to navigate local services and how to get help.
3. Families who have several needs say they know who their lead practitioner is, that all their needs were considered individually, and as a whole, and they only needed to tell their story once. They also say all the professionals work together to one plan in a team around the family.
4. Families say that those that helped them listened carefully, cared about them and told them about their strengths.
5. Families say that the help they have received addressed all their problems and they are better connected to their own support network and local community.

**Workforce**
1. There is a professional family support service. Whole family working is the norm for all people-facing public services through a shared practice framework. And early help is seen as everyone's responsibility.
2. Public services work together in place based or hub-based working where partners are integrated virtually or physically, based in the community with a common footprint.
3. We invest in our workforce with a workforce development plan to embed the shared practice framework and there is direct support for professionals to improve their practice through a quality assurance framework.
4. The response to different presenting needs are aligned or integrated to ensure there is always a whole family response.

**Communities**
1. We are improving the connectivity between voluntary and community sector activity, family networks and formal early help activity.
2. Our relationship with community groups and voluntary organisations embodies a culture of valuing the contribution of all.
3. We are building capacity in communities and harnessing the talent of parents, carers and young people with lived experience to help one another.
4. We are shifting decision making about local services and facilities towards families and communities.

**Leaders**
1. There is a senior strategic group accountable for the Early Help System and the partnership infrastructure evidences a focus on early help, whole family and whole system working.
2. Our system is balanced, so that more appropriate support is provided for children and families earlier to avoid unnecessary or costly statutory intervention in the children's social care system.
3. Partners have agreed a shared set of measures at family, cohort, demand and population level, including quality of practice and family voice, which collectively represent the effectiveness of the Early Help System.
4. There is a culture of using evaluation and evidence to inform development of the Early Help System.

**Data**
1. There is a senior strategic group with representation across the partnership, which is accountable for developing and driving the use of data for the whole Early Help System.
2. All data feeds are shared safely and robustly across the partnership, brought into one place and used to identify family needs.
3. Case management systems are accessible to all partners working with families and allow us to quantify all issues affecting the family and report on all issues and outcomes in a quantifiable way.
4. Working with our strategic partnership group we are developing innovative approaches to the use of data. We are using technological solutions to match data, present information to family workers and strategic boards and analyse these data to prevent the escalation of needs.

## 2. The Early Help system

**The Early Help System (Plain Text)**

The Early Help System available to children and their families is made up of three types of services that combine in different ways to form a local area's Early Help offer to its citizens. These are universal services, community support and acute and targeted services.

**Community support includes** Family and friends, local places and environments, online support services, voluntary, faith and community services, local members of the community and local businesses

**Universal services includes** Post-16 education, schools, early years settings, family hubs, children's centres and youth centres, GP surgeries, libraries, maternity services, specialist public health or community nurses and community co-ordinators

**Acute and targeted services includes** Family support, social care, accident and emergency departments, allied health professionals, mental health services, special education needs support services, jobcentre plus, school attendance and exclusion support, domestic abuse services, alternative provision, housing services, police, probation and prison services, family court and family court advisory services, substance misuse services, fire and rescue, youth offending and targeted youth services.

## 3. Multi-Agency Workforce

A strong Early Help System is made up of many different types of practitioners and services who operate as one. This table attempts to define the likely role of different types of practitioners in the Early Help System. The contents of this table were developed with local areas and relevant government departments. We recognise this is not a complete or exhaustive list, and the identified roles may have different names. This should be seen as a 'minimum' level of activity for how workforces should operate, for example how often they may act as lead practitioner. The lead practitioner (defined along with other aspects of whole family working in the family voice section) should always be the right person for the family at the right time, with the family having a say in who they are. In some circumstances specific professional groups or VCS organisations may have greater involvement as lead practitioner or as part of the team around the family following needs or risk assessment or because of specific contracting arrangements. The grouping terms relate to how often these workers would likely act as lead practitioner (e.g. frequent) and what role they have in whole family working (e.g. modelling)

Use this table to assess the current status of activity within your local workforce

## 4. The self assessment

This self-assessment section is structured as five sections focusing on family voice and experience, workforce, communities, leaders and data. Areas should work as a partnership to identify on average their score for the individual descriptors, what is working well and the evidence that shows this, and plans for what will be prioritised next.

**SCORING SYSTEM:**

## 5. Family voice and experience

**5.1 - Family engagement: We have well established mechanisms to gather and act on feedback from families and engage people with lived experience in service design, governance and quality assurance.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

There are service-specific methods for collecting feedback from families, including exit interviews, online portals and survey exercises. There are also good examples of co-production with SEN young people (SEN Young People's Forum), public volunteers on the Youth Justice Board and involvement of VCS management committees in the joint recruitment of early help service staff. Designated Children's Rights staff facilitate large-scale consultations with children and young people on service design themes and how/when they would like help and support. An action plan is in place to maintain the Hear by Right standard. An active Maternity Voices Partnership collects and acts upon the perspectives of those using local midwifery services. Colleagues in the CCG are developing a child-and-young-person friendly kitemark for local GP Practices. Our Reducing Parental Conflict model has collected regular feedback and case-studies from those using these DWP-funded pathways and we included a parent speaker at our March 2022 stakeholder conference.  Growing Healthy Gateshead 0-19 services introduced an innovative App in 2021, with a facility to collect the voice of service users.

What are you prioritising next?

Clear priority is to develop Parent/Carer Forums to support the planning and implementation of Family Hubs.

**5.2 - One Lead Practitioner: We have evidence that families say they know who their Lead Practitioner is and they have a good relationship with them.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

The Early Help Service uses the 'Tell Us What You Think' online portal and an online 'Exit Interview' process which asks direct questions about families' understanding of the LP role. Recognition/understanding rates are high. The LP is named on the Early Help Assessment document and support plan and recorded on the Mosaic system. A central record of those holding the LP role external to the LA is held by the CAF Data Team. Information products have been developed by the Early Help Service to show the name and direct contact details of the LP. Service decline rates are closely analysed for patterns and hypotheses discussed in performance clinics.

What are you prioritising next?

We plan to review the CAF/TAF process with key stakeholders and consult with practitioners across the sector on the barriers to taking the LP role and to consider emerging actions - including training, practice tools, opportunities for peer support and use of social media platforms to develop an increased sense of a practice community around early help work.

**5.3 - One assessment: We have evidence that families say the assessment process considered their needs individually and as a whole, their views were reflected throughout the process and the assessment meant they told their story once.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

The Early Help Service sets clear operational guidance on whole-family assessments and collecting/representing the views of family members.  60% of Early Help (CAF) assessments have been undertaken by the Early Help Service in the previous 12 months, an increase of 8% on pre-pandemic completion rates, with 40% undertaken by practitioners in the wider system, including education (26%) and health partners (6.5%). Online portals are used by the Early Help Service to collate feedback from families on the CAF/TAF process and a central CAF Team hold a central record of feedback pro forma shared by families open to wider early help partners.  While the CAF/TAF process is designed to reduce duplication and to place a families' stories at the centre of support, the CAF may be supplemented by other scaling and assessment tools, such as the new Early Help Exploitation Tool or the Referral Stage Questionnaire (RSQ) used to inform a response to inter-parental conflict.

What are you prioritising next?

> A new audit process is being introduced to look at the quality of assessments and support plans and will incorporate a more significant focus on direct consultation with the family (ie) their views on support received /progress achieved, with more direct observation of practice, as opposed to a 80% plus emphasis (audit) of desktop records.

**5.4 - One family plan: We have evidence that individuals and families say their needs are reflected in one family plan which the whole team around the family work to. Families and professionals agree outcomes together.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

> Data is held on the Team Around the Family (TAF) process by our CAF Data Team, including those TAF processes being ran by a LP external to the LA . 74% of TAF processes are led by internal (LA) services, higher than pre-pandemic levels. Where the TAF process is led by the Early Help Service, this is subject to regular management oversight, audit and clear operational standards.

What are you prioritising next?

> As above, the CAF/TAF process will be subject to stakeholder review in 2022 to ensure that the TAF process delivers improved outcomes for families, but can be adapted to fit different practice situations - for example, brief intervention models.

**5.5 - One team around the family – we have evidence from families about how well services work together to co-ordinate support to meet the needs of their family.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

> Collaboration across the early help system in the TAF process is generally good, with partners able/willing to attend and contribute on request. Increased use of online meetings has further enabled this. Partners see the benefits of co-ordinating family support in a single, integrated plan. Services attend a variety of multi-agency learning forums where whole-family co-operation can be discussed. From a family perspective, waiting times around SEND, mental health and housing services are raised often and reflect national challenges in these areas. Education and 0-19 health services continue to be the main partner in the TAF process.

What are you prioritising next?

> A number of key, strategic developments will further improve collaboration, including Family Hubs roll-out and the refresh of the Early Help Strategy.

**5.6 - Access to support: We have evidence that families say they know how to navigate local services and how to get help.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

> Families have access to an extensive range of information and services. This includes designated Early Help Service pages (visits/usage reviewed regularly), an updated SEN Local Offer, Children's Centre Facebook pages, Relationships Matter Twitter feed, Growing Healthy Gateshead Facebook pages and new App (launched February 2022), along with a range of bespoke projects such as the 'Little Orange Book' (CCG) publication on child health (the 'Big Orange Book' for adolescent and teenage wellbeing is also pending) and 'Brighten the Day' portal for local holiday provision. The Early Help Service runs a Monday-Friday duty line and mailbox for enquiries, along with a single, designated mailbox for parenting programme referrals. A network of community hubs are based throughout the borough, along with six children's centres to provide walk-up support.

What are you prioritising next?

> While there are many online/virtual and community-based entry points to the early help system, Family Hubs funding will provide an opportunity to develop a coherent communications strategy around universal and targeted forms of support. This will include publication of a Gateshead Start for Life Offer.

**5.7 - Sustainability: We have evidence that families say their needs including underlying issues have been addressed. They will be better equipped to cope when support from services ends because they have identified their own support network and feel connected with their local community and the support network it provides.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

We hold comprehensive data on outcomes achieved with families and track/measure the extent to which families are able to sustain changes after closure to the Early Help Service (ie) 91% of families do not return to access statutory social work services at 6 months, 89% at 12 months. Data is reviewed at specific performance clinics and hypotheses developed around patterns of demand. The LA has invested significantly in increasing the capacity of the Family Group Conference team and training/guidance has been delivered to help all frontline Early Help Service staff develop a 'family network' approach. VCS community hubs (now supported by Lottery funding), children's centres and holiday/outreach work in a wide range of locality settings operate across the borough.

What are you prioritising next?

Family Hub implementation will increase opportunities for families to access co-located/integrated services in community locations.

## 6. Workforce

**6.1 - The workforce in our area operates effectively to deliver whole family working and is aligned with the levels set out in the workforce table (section 3 above or page 11 of the published document).**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

Whole-family working is well-embedded across frontline Early Help and social work teams, and increasingly in domestic abuse interventions. Education (especially in primary school settings), nursery and health visiting professionals continue to undertake the early help assessment (CAF) and TAF process. While 26% of all TAF processes are led by the wider early help system (ie not led by the Early Help Service), the level of co-operation in multi-agency plans is good. The Early Help Service provides a service response (advice and signposting) to 4,000 children per year (May 2021 - May 2022) with 1,148 allocated for whole-family work as part of the CAF/TAF process. The Early Help Service offer has diversified to provide a Team Around the School (TAS) model and to incorporate the Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC) Programme with Gateshead acting as the Referral Gateway on behalf of the North East region. Parent Outreach Worker capacity in children's centres has also been increased to 6.0 FTE, allowing more holistic work to be undertaken with families.

What are you prioritising next?

Undertake a stakeholder review of the CAF/TAF process, develop a practice toolkit and more online resources to support whole-family working.

**6.2 - Early help is understood and seen as everyone's responsibility across the partnership of services working with children, adults and families. We have a shared culture and set of core principles that underpin the wider Early Help System.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

The Early Help Strategy recognises the partnership contribution to the family support system with an "everyone's business" theme throughout, including a clear vision statement and principles. Shared culture is being developed by an increasing move towards co-location and co-delivery in localities, including Early Help Service collaborations with midwifery, health-visiting and VCS providers.

What are you prioritising next?

Refresh the Early Help Strategy and prioritise the implementation of Family Hubs, linking services to the diverse, all-age offer provided by VCS community hub sites.

**6.3 - We have a shared practice framework and locally agreed processes for professionals in partner agencies working across the wider Early Help System which is known, understood and consistently used.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

Practice standards and policies are provided by the Gateshead Safeguarding Children's Board, including practice tools, detailed operational guidance and information on thresholds. Our Ofsted (October 2021) Focused Visit on the front door highlighted the strengths of our partnership approach - "Closely aligned, mature professional partnerships work together effectively to
safeguard children from harm. Thresholds are understood well, and scrutinised frequently", building positively on our (2019) ILAC outcome. Early help, social work, police, domestic abuse and 0-19 health colleagues meet on a daily (Mon-Fri) basis to triage new contact information and to provide timely, proportionate responses. The Early Help Strategy and Supporting Families Outcomes Plan are partnership documents. While there is no single, overarching practice framework for all aspects of frontline delivery across the system (there is understandable variation according to specific service remits), there is a high degree of commonality in practice approaches supported by a strong offer of multi-agency training. For example, Level 3 Safeguarding training is jointly facilitated by an Early Help Service manager, social work manager, GP and Designated Safeguarding Nurse.

Early Help Service Managers have completed (March 2022) an NHS Leadership Development Programme with colleagues from across the early help and health system. The Supporting Families Employment Adviser (SFEA) roles continue to be embedded within the Early Help Service.

**What are you prioritising next?**

Embed use of the new Mosaic database used by the Early Help Service, children's social work teams, Domestic Abuse Team and Family Group Conference colleagues. Further roll-out of the Narrative Practice (Life Story) training and develop a joint practice model across early help and social work services following the appointment of a Practice Lead role (Paige Thomason). Specific practice developments will continue to be shared/embedded across frontline services - such as the ICON (infant crying) and Protect and Prevent (SUDI) models.

**6.4 - We have a multi-agency workforce development plan based on workforce development needs, to help embed the shared practice framework and culture. This equips the workforce with appropriate levels of understanding and skills to enable early identification of and response to family needs and the implementation of a whole family approach.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

**What is working well and what evidence do you have?**

A multi-agency workforce development plan is in place and is informed/updated by a designated Training and Advisory Group (TAG) attended by service and parctice leads from across early help, children's and adults' services. A strong and varied training offer is available to all staff working with families. This has been improved further (June 2022) by the introduction of a Learning Hub portal to map training against core competencies and to ensure timely renewal of key skill/knowledge areas.

**What are you prioritising next?**

Develop an updated training module for undertaking the early help (CAF) assessment and leading the TAF process, possibly with an early focus on the family support workforce in primary schools.

**6.5 - We know the quality of early help practice across professionals listed in the workforce table. We directly support professionals in our partnership to improve their practice, including around whole family working, through a quality assurance framework, e.g. through audit, supervision and guidance.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

**What is working well and what evidence do you have?**

Robust processes exist to oversee and improve the quality of practice in the LA's Early Help Service, including weekly output reports, case file audits, observation of practice and regular supervision. All case file documents must be seen and authorised by a line manager with oversight recorded. Advice and support is provided to those working in the wider early help system and undertaking the CAF/TAF process by the Early Help Service Duty Team. A shared Early Help Outcomes Framework is embedded within the Early Help Strategy but more needs to be done to share and embed this across the system. The (DWP) Workforce Development Grant for Reducing Parental Conflict has supported a suite of evidence-based training for practitioners across the system.

**What are you prioritising next?**

Managers across early help and children's services will attend joint supervision training in July 2022 to develop a shared, reflective supervision model. The (DWP) Local Grant will provide new training opportunities in Triple P, Parents Plus and Fatherhood Institute interventions. Our Family Hub Steering Group will also consider how the workforce development strand of Family Hub funding can be deployed to support delivery of the Start for Life and wider Hub offer. We also await details of the increased Youth Justice grant and ring-fenced early intervention element of that funding to develop a prevention model which will adopt a whole-family approach in some/most scenarios.

**6.6 - We have a model of place-based or hub-based working in the community with a common footprint. Partners are integrated either virtually or physically in e.g. family or community hubs. The model helps underpin the principles of whole family working.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

**What is working well and what evidence do you have?**

Gateshead will implement the Family Hub model in 2022-23 as one of the 75 LA areas in the initial tranche for funding. A strong community-based offer currently exists through (a) children's centres, (b) diversified use of children's centre buildings for a wide range of health and VCS partners to deliver an all-age offer and (c) a network of VCS-led community hubs with LA support. Following extensive prototype testing of new ways of working through a Public Service Reform (PSR) pilot, a new locality hub in the South of the borough will start in Summer 2022. The strategic 'Thrive' vision of the Council is to deploy increased resource into the wards of highest need. Co-location of children's centre and midwifery services is already in place and parenting work is delivered at a variety of community settings. Team Around the School (TAS) Early Help Workers are based at four sites across the borough and we have co-located a new Early Help Worker with the Edbert's House charity in the Beacon Lough East area. A strong and diverse (DFE) Holiday and Food (HAF) offer continues to use over 60 providers to deliver recreational activities in most wards in the borough, including mobile and pop-up provision. The LA has supported successful Lottery fund applications for up to 6 VCS organisations providing various types of family support, such as childcare, befriending services, adult education and SEND support.

**What are you prioritising next?**

Implementation of the Family Hub model in Gateshead is a key, strategic priority. Updated data profiling has commenced to inform planning and a strong steering group is in place, led by the Director of Public Health (Alice Wiseman). We will embed the new Primary Team Around the School (PTAS) role in 5 local settings. A Shared Prosperity Fund proposal is being finalised (July 2022) which will include a plan to create new neighbourhood pods of detached youth work staff. A review of LA locality assets is underway - including library buildings - providing opportunities for further co-location or joint delivery of family support.

**6.7 - The response to different presenting needs (pathways) are aligned or integrated to ensure there is always a whole family response. This could take the form of a 'team around the school' approach where all relevant professionals work together to anticipate and respond early to for example school engagement, mental health or special educational needs of children and young people in the school.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

**What is working well and what evidence do you have?**

Gateshead operates a Team Around the School (TAS) process in 4 secondary school settings, working alongside a range of professionals to deliver co-ordinated support through regular panel/triage identification of those in need. Our Social Workers In Schools (SWIS) DFE pilot ends in July 2022 and a sustainable funding model is currently being explored with schools. This is complemented further by a pilot offering enhanced social work oversight of Designated Safeguarding Leads working in 6 secondary and 65 primary schools. The Early Help Service duty system provides advice/support to a wide range of professionals looking to lead a CAF/TAF process and has an agreed process with the Single Point of Access (SPA) of the Children and Young People's Service (CAMHS) for timely triage/allocation of families where young people have mental health or neurodevelopmental issues.

**What are you prioritising next?**

Introduce a Primary Team Around the School (PTAS) model from July 2022 to support whole-family working in a cohort of local primary schools in communities of highest need and where persistent absentee profiles are highest.

## 7. Communities

**7.1 - Public services partner closely with voluntary and community groups to maintain up to date information about local community assets, community groups, voluntary sector support and faith groups and have made this information accessible to local staff and residents e.g. through a website.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

Support from VCS organisations is listed on the 'Our Gateshead' website. A wide range of web-pages are hosted or linked to the Early Help Service web-pages.

What are you prioritising next?

While there is an online directory for VCS organisations, we feel that more could be done to better co-ordinate and share information from VCS organisations to show families a coherent, community-based offer. We are working with our data teams to undertake a renewed mapping exercise of community assets as part of our work on developing Family Hubs as an offer within a wider network of community provision.

**7.2 - Our relationship with community groups and voluntary organisations embodies a culture of valuing the contribution of all, prizes creativity, collaboration, and local solutions; alongside quality and inclusivity. We are building a culture and system where our communities understand that everyone helps to deliver a whole family approach.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

There are excellent examples of collaborative working between the VCS and the wider early help system. For example, the Early Help Service has embeeded a worker within the Edbert's House charity in the High Fell ward with residents involved in the recruitment process. Neighbourhood Management colleagues have also support successful Lottery grant applications for up to 6 community hub sites and children's centres host a wide range of VCS projects such as the Andy's Man (male mental health) charity and the Autism Hub. LA services work closely with a wide range of VCS partners, including Citizen's Advice Gateshead, Carers Trust Tyne and Wear, North East Counselling Services and the Gateshead Foodbank.

What are you prioritising next?

VCS colleagues are involved in the Family Hub Steering Group and will help us shape the vision around the implementation of our local Family Hub model.

**7.3 - We are building capacity in communities and making the most of the refreshed sense of community which grew through COVID-19 . We harness the talent and contribution of parents, carers and young people with lived experience to help one another.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

See above - LA staff worked alongside VCS colleagues in community settings to deliver a frontline COVID response. Lottery grants have enabled community support to continue in these locations and the LA continues to support VCS organisations with grant applications, volunteer recruitment and use of LA buildings.

What are you prioritising next?

We will identify, recruit and develop parents/carers interested in supporting the roll-out and management of Family Hubs and explore opportunities to develop more peer support networks.

**7.4 - We are improving the connectivity between voluntary and community sector activity, family networks and formal early help activity.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 –

see scale above

3

**What is working well and what evidence do you have?**

See above - the Early Help Service has embedded a worker with the Edbert's House charity in the High Fell ward and children's centres continue to host/provide space for VCS delivery from a wide range of partners such as the Felling Foodbank. LA staff from housing work alongside Citizen's Advice colleagues in VCS community hubs and there is a corporate vision - 'Thrive' - around increased integration in locality settings.

**What are you prioritising next?**

More needs to be done in 'joining-up' the formal system offer with advice/help provided by VCS partners. The communications strategy linked to Family Hubs - including publication of the Start for Life offer - provides an opportunity to articulate a coherent support offer across the VCS and formal early help system.

**7.5 - We are shifting decision making about local services and facilities towards families and communities.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

**What is working well and what evidence do you have?**

VCS community hubs are ran by volunteer management committees and supported by LA officers. Formal early help services have user groups but direct influence on decision-making varies and more needs to be explored and shared on the genuine level of co-production across services. The LA continues to employ Children's Rights officers who work with local young people on quality testing local services and a wide range of consultation exercises. LA (SEN) colleagues continue to develop the SEN Young Person's Forum introduced in 2020/21.

**What are you prioritising next?**

Identify, recruit and develop a Parent/Carer Forum to inform the implementation of Family Hubs. While there is wide evidence of collecting family feedback, evidence of genuine, regular co-production opportunities are more limited.

## 8. Leaders

**8.1 - There is a senior strategic group accountable for the Early Help System and the partnership infrastructure evidences a focus on early help, whole family and whole system working.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

There is no distinct, senior, strategic group for the Early Help system but there is a Children's Systems Board where early help work - across partners - is discussed and actions agreed. Various other forums comprise local representatives of the early help system, including the Child Be Healthy Board and the Children's Centre Advisory Board, chaired by the Cabinet Lead for Children and Young People (Councillor Gary Haley). Early help developments are shared regularly with elected members through Portfolio and Overview and Scrutiny LA systems.

What are you prioritising next?

Family Hub developments will be overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board. Consult with partners on the formation of a new strategic board for the Early Help System.

**8.2 - Our system is balanced, so that more appropriate support is provided for children and families earlier to avoid unnecessary or costly statutory intervention in the children's social care system.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

The Early Help Service has continued to provide an offer differentiated to need. This includes a wide range of online information and e-learning options to psycho-educational parenting programmes of all levels. Children's Centres offer provide a strong and varied offer for parents of children aged 0-5 years, while our Play Service continues to provide small group support for those with SEND and a one-to-one community outreach function. Holiday provision has been supported further by Holiday and Food (HAF) funding. Frontline family intervention has the capacity to work with up to 800 children at any one time and provides whole-family support through the CAF/TAF process and uses a range of evidence-based approaches for direct intervention work. Gateshead has acted as the regional 'referral gateway' for the national Reducing Parental Conflict Programme for the last 3 years and is now using DWP funding to make the transition to a local RPC offer. Investment has also been made to expand the capacity of the Family Group Conference Service, Domestic Abuse Team, Behaviour Change (DVA Perpetrator) Team and to appoint a designated worker for return interviews after missing episodes. We continue to use data and evaluation to inform how/when family support can be provided. Household Support Fund grants are distributed efficiently to those in most need and in full compliance with national eligibility guidance.

What are you prioritising next?

Implementation of Family Hubs will become a key strategic priority in 2022/23. Developing increased capacity for prevention work to prevent entry into the youth justice system and exploring delivery models for a new detached youth work model are also key priorities. The (DWP) Local Grant will also provide funding for a new Healthy Relationships Pathway Co-ordinator post to help provide an improved, more coherent offer of evidence-based parenting and RPC programmes. Procurement will follow shortly on commissioning provider/s for a new trauma-informed service for young people, including a priority assessment pathway. Colleagues in housing services are undertaking a stakeholder review of the housing allocations and lettings policy to provide greater flexibility and support to families in highest need and to minimise multiple moves and crisis interventions.

**8.3 - Partners have agreed a shared set of measures at family, cohort, demand and population level, including quality of whole family practice and family voice, which collectively represent the effectiveness of the Early Help System. The performance against these measures shows that outcomes for families are improving.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

A clear, multi-agency Early Help Outcomes framework is in place and is linked to the Early Help Strategy. Service-specific performance frameworks take primacy, however. Outcomes evidence through the CAF/TAF process, including those shared by Lead Practitioners from outside of the LA, are recorded and checked against

the measures set-out in the Supporting Families Outcomes Plan. A Learning and Improvement Group (LIG) shares good practice and audit exercises across a variety of partner services to identify 'what works' and where common approaches can be taken in terms of training or practice standards.

**What are you prioritising next?**

Consider the relationship between the Supporting Families Outcomes Plan measures and any new or emerging performance framework linked to Family Hubs.

**8.4 - There is a culture of using evaluation and evidence to inform the development of the Early Help System and the quality of whole family working. Where appropriate to local and individual needs, evidence-based services are used.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

**What is working well and what evidence do you have?**

Robust processes are in place to share learning across services, including thematic groups linked to the Gateshead Children's Systems Board. Ofsted ILAC (2019) and Focused Visit (2021) reports reinforce our self-assessment of operating a strong and effective early help system which is always seeking to improve. We have undertaken a regional research exercise into RPC work and the effectiveness of front-door systems making timely identification responses to IPC issues. This was shared in a regional conference in March 2021. Training is discussed, planned and evaluations shared in a Training and Advisory Group (TAG) across services. A Locality Working Group shares lessons learned from the Public Service Reform (PSR) pilots where holistic support has been provided using data cues to identify those in need. Early Help Service outcome data is reported into performance clinics chaired by the Deputy Service Director. Gateshead submits the annual Planning Tool to DWP to self-assess maturity of our RPC offer against national criteria and this (Early Help System) guide.

**What are you prioritising next?**

Embed the new case audit process with an increased emphasis on family feedback and direct observation of practice. The DWP Local Grants for RPC will be used to further expand the evidence-based offer around family stability and parenting. Whole-family working is apparent in the Early Help Service and in some partnership settings where the CAF/TAF process is managed but more needs to be done in expanding the whole-family approach, particularly in community and education settings. Improved availability of CAF/TAF training and practice tools will support that process.

**8.5 - Working towards a shared culture, principles, practice framework and set of processes within the Early Help system is a standard feature in all commissioning processes and decisions.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

**What is working well and what evidence do you have?**

A new, multi-agency strategy for children, young people and families is being developed after comprehensive consultation with partners. There is limited evidence that there is a shared practice framework across the early help system but there is commonality of approach is using the established CAF/TAF process and in escalating cases to children's social care where thresholds are well-understood across partners. There are also excellent examples of multi-agency training attended and common practice approaches across the system - for example, the ICON principles to help parents manage infant crying.

**What are you prioritising next?**

More multi-agency training and secondment opportunities. Refresh of the Early Help Strategy, including updated vision statement for adoption by partners. Family Hub implementation, with an increased emphasis on a joined-up support offer and co-location of services, should act as a catalyst for cultural change.

## 9. Data

**9.1 - We have regular data feeds from all parts of the partnership to support whole family working. These are open feeds and underpinned by strong data sharing agreements.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

Data feeds are in place for core outcome reporting and PBR purposes. Current feeds include police, housing, children's social care, youth justice service, education (census), probation, council tax and benefits. All targets for outcomes and attachments have been met since the inception of the programme, including 2021/22.

What are you prioritising next?

Renewal of the DSA with Northumbria Police is a key priority and discussion with police counterparts started in June 2022.

**9.2 - Our case management system allows all partners to securely access all relevant cases and record whole family assessments.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

The Early Help Service moved to the (Servelec) Mosaic system in January 2022. This case management system is accessible by colleagues in Children's and Adults Social Care, Domestic Abuse Team and Children's Social Care, but not external partners. A separate process exists to enable those working in the wider system to register /log CAF/TAF documentation and to check LP contact details.

What are you prioritising next?

We need to explore the feasibility of partners being able to complete/upload CAF/TAF records online, direct to the case management system.

**9.3 - Our case management system allows us to record all issues affecting the family and outcomes in a quantifiable way and run reports on these.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

The Early Help Service adopted a new database (Servelec Mosaic) from January 2022 and we are developing increased functionality around reports. A bespoke Request for Early Help (RFEH) process records presenting issues/needs and the case closure process reflects the Supporting Families Outcomes Framework, with automated reporting lines to support the PBR claims process and the evidencing of outcomes achieved. Comprehensive performance workbooks are produced for review at monthly clinics for management (peer) analysis, detailing referral trends, ward data, family composition, outputs, outcomes and step-up/down patterns between Early Help and social work services.

What are you prioritising next?

We need to develop the desktop showing families' needs for frontline practitioners at the outset then at fixed points during casework.

**9.4 - We have an effective data governance board that is accountable for our progress on data transformation. It supports us and our partners to unlock and resolve issues with data sharing and direct how we use data both for performance and analytics and how we consult on system changes that would impact across the partnership. Data are used by the partnership to support resourcing, planning, whole family working and early intervention. An identified member of the Children's Services Senior Leadership team has responsibility for driving forward actions from this board.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 –

see scale above

2

**What is working well and what evidence do you have?**

We do not have a data governance board for the early help system but we do have access to data governance specialists in a designated legal team for children's services who advise on the Supporting Families project work. Our designated lead (Natalie Baldwin) chairs the North East Data Protection Forum in our region.

**What are you prioritising next?**

We have no plans to develop a distinct data governance board but will ensure that data maturity is a standing item in our senior management meetings and strategic forums.

**9.5 - We have a system that allows us to pull together all data, analyse these data and ensure practitioners can see results.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

**What is working well and what evidence do you have?**

Comprehensive workbooks on performance data are shared with service management groups for peer review and analysis. Written commentary/analysis are applied to each thematic area and the Deputy Service Director requests bespoke reports on new trends around needs and service demands. Performance data is shared regularly with frontline practitioners through a weekly performance report and discussed in monthly supervisions and team meetings. The multi-agency Learning and Improvement Group (LIG) continues to share learning, performance and inspection outcomes from across the family support system. Practitioners are able to view the needs of the families on allocation by checking text in the Request for Early Help document but no specific breakdown is provided across the full range of identifiers, nor are 'live' updates provided during casework. History /chronology checks are undertaken by the Early Hep Service duty team prior to allocation and Closure Summary templates are configured to reflect the Supporting Families outcomes framework.

**What are you prioritising next?**

We need to consider how Mosaic functionality can provide a dashboard for practitioners, showing how the family has met the programme's identifiers as a minimum standard to inform casework. We will seek to understand the synergy between the Family Hub and Supporting Families performance frameworks and use this to inform a greater understanding of how, where and when families are being supported.

**9.6 - We are using data to inform performance across the Early Help partnership, demand and resourcing (including commissioning), operational delivery and workforce development.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

**What is working well and what evidence do you have?**

Data is collated into performance workbooks for analysis at regular Early Help Service performance clinics where issues and trends are identified, analysis undertaken and hypotheses prepared and tested. Data has informed recent changes to recruitment - leading to deployment of staff to a specific geographical area and to work with targeted primary schools. Workforce development is discussed a designated Training and Advisory Group (TAG) which takes feedback from case audits, learning reviews and inspections to inform workforce development plans.

**What are you prioritising next?**

We will be using performance data to inform Family Hub implementation, alongside population data profiles, to inform how and where the Hub offer should be made to achieve maximise reach and effectiveness.

**9.7 - We have developed innovative analytical products. This could be needs analysis, place-based analysis, individual or family level risk analytics, apps or systems to improve information available to practitioners and partners, quantifying qualitative case notes or other documentation or any other product or system that has changed/improved our ways of working.**

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

**What is working well and what evidence do you have?**

Mosaic provides the functionality to run bespoke reports which both inform and drive service improvement, supplemented by regular performance clinics.

What are you prioritising next?

Explore the compatibility of Mosaic to analytical tools and the family-level information available to frontline practitioners.

## 10. Earned Autonomy criteria and eligibility - for information only

**This section is to communicate the minimum thresholds for each descriptor that need to be met before the national team may invite you to apply for Earned Autonomy status. This has been published in the Earned Autonomy prospectus.**

**Early Help System Guide descriptors used for Stage 1 (for both prospective and existing EA areas):**

**Family voice and experience:**

Family engagement - We have well established mechanisms to gather and act on feedback from families and engage people with lived experience in service design, governance and quality assurance.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Minimum score:

4

**Workforce:**

The workforce in our area operates effectively to deliver whole family working and is aligned with the levels set out in the workforce table (section 3 above or page 11 of the published document).

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Minimum score:

4

**Workforce:**

We have a shared practice framework and locally agreed processes for professionals in partner agencies working across the wider Early Help System which is known, understood and consistently used.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Minimum score:

3

**Leaders:**

There is a senior strategic group accountable for the Early Help System and the partnership infrastructure evidences a focus on early help, whole family and whole system working.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Minimum score:

4

**Leaders:**

Partners have agreed a shared set of measures at family, cohort, demand and population level, including quality of whole family practice and family voice, which collectively represent the effectiveness of the Early Help System. The performance against these measures shows that outcomes for families are improving.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Minimum score:

3

**Data:**

We have regular data feeds from all parts of the partnership to support whole family working. These are open feeds and underpinned by strong data sharing agreements.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Minimum score:

4

**Data:**

Our case management system allows us to record all issues affecting the family and outcomes in a quantifiable way and run reports on these.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Minimum score:

4

**Data:**

We have an effective data governance board that is accountable for our progress on data transformation. It supports us and our partners to unlock and resolve issues with data sharing and direct how we use data both for performance and analytics and how we consult on system changes that would impact across the partnership. Data are used by the partnership to support resourcing, planning, whole family working and early intervention. An identified member of the Children's Services Senior Leadership team has responsibility for driving forward actions from this board.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Minimum score:

4

**Data:**

We have developed innovative analytical products. This could be needs analysis, place-based analysis, individual or family level risk analytics, apps or systems to improve information available to practitioners and partners, quantifying qualitative case notes or

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Minimum score:

3

other documentation or any other product or system that has changed/improved our
ways of working.

## 11. Selection of descriptors

All areas are required through the Supporting Families programme to choose three specific descriptors they want to work on and progress during the coming year. Areas should use the following methodology to choose the three descriptors:

If the area is **data model 2** or below, **choose ONLY descriptors from the data section**;

If the area is **data model 3**, **choose one descriptor from the data section** and **two from the servicedescriptors** (family voice and experience, workforce, communities, leaders).

If the area is **data model 4** or above, **choose ONLY service descriptors.**

After applying this methodology, areas are free to choose any descriptor across the 5 sections (family voice and experience, workforce, communities, leaders and data). You can select more than one from individual sections of interest if preferred.

If you need to reference the full descriptor explanation or associated guidance in order to make your selection, these can be found in the relevant sections above **(Section 5 - Family voice and experience, Section 6 - Workforce, Section 7 - Communities, Section 8 - Leaders and Section 9 - Data)**

**Gateshead's data model (as submitted in the September 2021 data survey):**

> 2

**Here is a reminder of the different data models:**

**Data Model 1: Manual –** Receiving data from other partners which is stored in separate files, and which is unmatched to case management systems. The local authority Supporting Families Outcome Plan is not quantified and there is no reporting from the case management system to keyworkers.

**Data Model 2: Basic –** Some data sources are brought together in basic data software, which is used to match and store data, identify families who may need support and to monitor progress. The Supporting Families Outcomes Plan is embedded in the case management system and receives manually inputted reports on outcomes and key indicators.

**Data Model 3: Building blocks –** Bringing most data sources together including early help case management data. The data is visible to keyworkers in a spreadsheet or form which is only provided once or twice during a case.

**Data Model 4: Early maturity –** Using a data warehouse or data lake where data is accessible to workers automatically in the case management system and which is updated when new feeds are received. More advanced data system software is used with automated matching and calculation of whether Payment by Results outcomes are met is built in. There are likely to be some open feeds.

**Data Model 5: Mature –** Data warehouse or data lake model as in the early maturity model but where primarily open feeds are used and where data is used to conduct needs analysis.

**Data Model 6: Advanced –** Sophisticated data model with open feeds as in the mature model, but where the system has been expanded beyond Supporting Families services and includes whole children's services or whole of council solutions.

Do you think that Gateshead's data model has changed since you submitted the data survey in September 2021?

> No

Descriptor one

> 9.3 - Data

Descriptor two

> 9.5 - Data

Descriptor three

> 9.7 - Data

## 12. How the DLUHC will use the Early Help System Guide self-assessment submissions

The central team will use the EHSG self-assessments and chosen priority descriptors in the following ways:

1. Areas who have scored highly on individual descriptors may be approached for information around the practice in place, for this to be shared with other local areas. This could be developed into national good practice material to be linked to the individual descriptors.

2. Areas who have chosen the same priority descriptors will be supported to come together in action learning sets to support one another with the development of their work. The beginning of these action learning sets will be facilitated by the national team but handed over to local areas to support continued networking and learning.

3. The narrative text that areas submit in their EHSG self-assessments will be analysed by the national team to inform support and challenge conversations with local areas.

4. The analysis of the narrative will also be used to understand common areas for development and inform national policy making.

If you require further information, please contact **families.team@levellingup.gov.uk**.

## 13. Permission to share

As a result of our partnership working with specifically DfE on the programme, we will share the full results including narrative with DfE.

**Please acknowledge that you understand that your Early Help System Guide scoring, the self-assessment content and your chosen priority descriptors will be shared with DfE:**   ☑

To enable and encourage peer support and joint planning of development activity, we would like to share the scoring (not narrative) for each descriptor and the chosen priority descriptors from each area with all SF Co-ordinators during July 2022.

**Please confirm that you are happy for your Early Help System Guide scoring and chosen priority descriptors to be shared with Supporting Families Co-ordinators to enable networking, joint planning of development activity and peer support:**

Yes

To facilitate joint working across Government, we would like to share the scoring (not narrative) for each descriptor and the chosen priority descriptors from each area with Other Government Departments.

**Please confirm that you are happy for your Early Help System Guide scoring and chosen priority descriptors to be shared with Other Government Departments:**

Yes