

# EARLY HELP STRATEGY

Somerset County Council

# CONSULTATION DRAFT



[WWW.SOMERSET.GOV.UK](http://WWW.SOMERSET.GOV.UK)



March 2013

# Contents

	Page no
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1 Definition and context	3
1.2 Principles underpinning our Early Help Strategy	4
<b>2. Somerset Early Help Strategy</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Vision for Early Help Services	5
2.2 Early Help Objectives	5
2.3 Somerset Context	6
2.4 Our Commitment to Families	7
2.5 Profile	8
2.6 Early Help Strands in Somerset	9
<b>3. Early Help Implementation &amp; Delivery Plan</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1 Priorities & Next Steps	11
3.2 Strategic Commissioning	11
3.3 Identification, assessment and support to those in need of Early Help	12
3.4 Arrangements for Service Delivery	12
3.5 Issues to be tackled	13

## Consultation Draft

This document is a consultation draft. Delivery of the strategy will require a multi-agency response and therefore we are keen to hear the views of these critical stakeholders amongst others to shape our thinking and priorities for delivery. Your comments are required by Wednesday 1st May 2013.

Please send them through to Jan Stafford [jastafford@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:jastafford@somerset.gov.uk) who is also contactable on 01823 355010.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Definition and context

We want Somerset to be a place where children and young people thrive. By putting this Early Help strategy in place, Somerset will be a place where our children and young people:

- Are safe and cared for
- Are treated fairly and equally
- Achieve their full potential both in and out of school
- Build self esteem and aim high
- Have better employment opportunities
- Benefit from family wellbeing and local prosperity
- Have integrated support to tackle issues

This is what we want for our children and young people. To ensure this happens we work with many partners to provide “universal” services such as schools and health. However sometimes a child or young person needs additional support or specialist provision and this Early Help Strategy sets out how we will deliver this.

Early Help means providing support for Somerset children, young people and their families to improve their outcomes and life chances. Early Help and support reflects the widespread recognition that it is better to identify and deal with problems early rather than respond when difficulties have become acute and demand action by services which often are less effective and more expensive. 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 problems may emerge at any point throughout childhood and adolescence.

Early Help includes using targeted services designed to reduce or prevent specific problems from getting worse and becoming deep seated or entrenched.

A renewed focus and alignment of services is necessary because of the changing context within which all partners are working. A number of drivers have emerged nationally and locally which have identified this as an opportune moment to revisit plans and policies namely:

- Commissioning focus and priorities according to the Somerset County Council County Plan.
- Defining the “Early Help” offer in the light of Somerset “Family Focus” programme and the recommendations of the Munro review.
- Ofsted recommendations in its report to Somerset County Council in May 2012.
- Government focus on “troubled families”.
- Children’s Centres review and improvement plans.
- Review of family and youth support
- Financial pressures and reduced resourcing levels across all partner organisations

## 1.2 Principles underpinning our Early Help strategy

This strategy will help find the most effective and efficient way of using all the resources available, including services, workforce, finances and capital assets. We will do this in a coherent and integrated multi-agency way. By prioritising the most vulnerable and by intervening early we will improve outcomes and prevent more costly and longer term problems. It will also help us to focus on the overarching objective - to help improve the life chances, outcomes and ambitions of children, young people and their families.

A number of principles underpin our strategy and the way we will deliver services to help to manage demand and to prevent already identified issues from getting worse:

- The role of children and young people's services in Somerset is to give all children in Somerset, no matter their background, the best possible start in life.
- Children's needs are best met when addressed in the context of the whole family. Services will work with families in an integrated and holistic way.
- Parents have primary responsibility for, and are the main influence on, their children. Our role is therefore to strengthen parents' role in their children's lives, whilst steadfastly remaining vigilant with our duty of safeguarding vulnerable children and young people.
- The best way of helping people is to help them help themselves. Our role is to support families to be self-reliant, to become less dependent on public services, and to take control of their own lives.
- Intervening early prevents longer term, and potentially more complex, more damaging, and more costly problems emerging later. We will therefore invest in Early Help and targeted services so that we see fewer children requiring specialist services.
- The correlation between worklessness, child poverty, and negative outcomes is strong. We will therefore support those parents and young people who need extra help in order to enter or remain in employment.
- Through our Commissioning and Service Review process, decisions about what is commissioned and the best model of delivery will be evidence based and targeted at those most in need.
- We will continue to meet our statutory duties, however we recognise the constraints imposed by the declining level of public resource. We will need to ensure value for money from all funding and this will mean that all services will be expected to achieve optimum efficiency and effectiveness. This will include our multi-agency and partnership working.

## 2. Somerset Early Help Strategy

### 2.1 Vision for Early Help Services

Somerset's ambition with regard to early help services is to offer high quality easily accessible services that target those who need them most. We want to ensure that:

- Children and their families receive services that they need, when they need them and where they can access them.
- Service providers work together to provide coherent and integrated early help services for children and young people and their families when they most need them improving life chances and reducing the likelihood of the development of more complex needs.
- Commissioners work together across sectors and services to meet need in the best way possible and achieve best value for money.
- We know and can demonstrate through evidence and feedback that the services provided have made a difference to the lives of children, young people and their families and local communities

This ambition and vision is aligned to the County Plan for Somerset County Council and embedded in a number of Business Plan activities which underpin it.

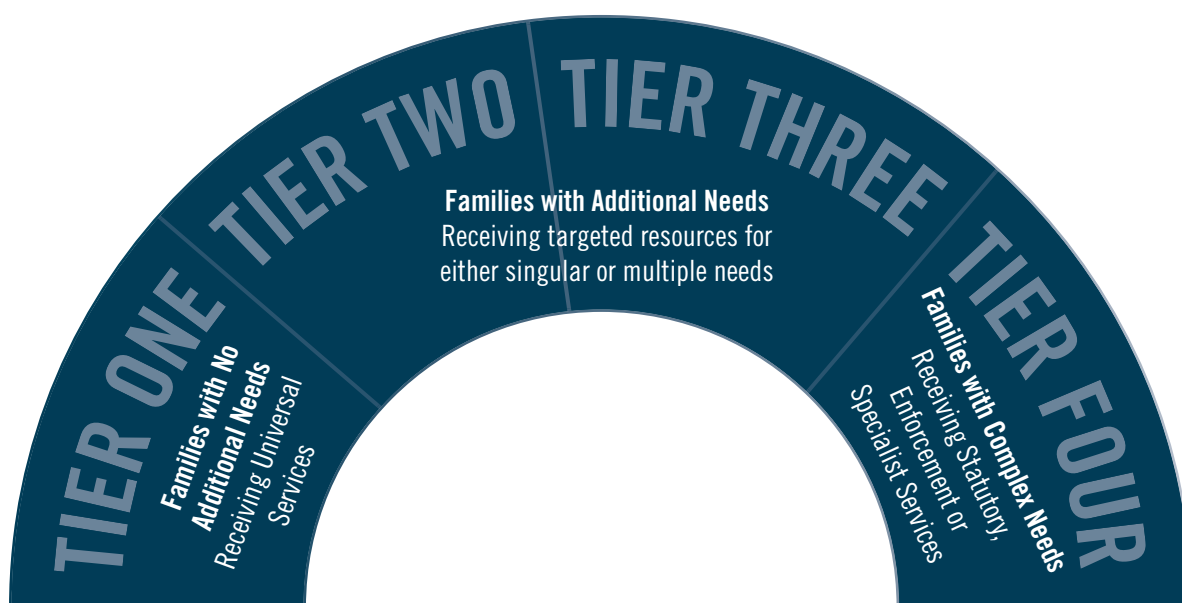
### 2.2 Early Help Objectives

Over the next three years our objectives for Early Help and targeted services are to:

- Reduce the number of children requiring intervention from statutory services;
- Build the capacity of vulnerable families to support their children in achieving positive outcomes;
- Address child poverty and worklessness through better targeting;
- Bridge the equality gap for children and young people;
- Target resources at those most in need of extra help;
- Reduce public sector costs.

## 2.3 Somerset Context

Services for Children are currently defined as operating across four tiers as shown in the model.



Tier one focuses on the provision of universal services for families such as schools, GPs, Health Visitors, Children Centres, subsidised childcare and Early Education provision. These are services that are available to all. If we get delivery and support right at this stage the need to progress through the tiers towards more targeted support should reduce.

Sometimes there comes a point when further targeted support or intervention for some families is necessary. Tiers two and three provide services aimed at children in need which is defined as " those children who need additional local authority services to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development; or to prevent significant or further harm to health or development; are disabled. Examples of these services include Targeted Youth Support, Child and Adolescent Mental Health services, Pupil Referral Units, Housing Support and Family Support. In Somerset early help and prevention services are defined as operating across these tiers.

Tier four is for high risk families whose needs are often complex and in receipt of statutory, enforcement or specialist services for example Child protection, Youth Offending Team, Young People's Drugs and Alcohol Services.

Somerset recognises the importance and need to work and integrate with partners across all four tiers of provision. Research shows early intervention produces better outcomes for children, young people and their families as well as reducing the spend of all agencies on acute or statutory interventions.



## 2.4 Our Commitment to Families

The delivery of this Early Help Strategy will only succeed if we work with families and not allow them to feel that they are being “done to”. It is critical that children, young people and families maintain the right to self determination. Children Services in Somerset are therefore committed to ensuring:

**We will listen to and involve families and take joint action** - The first point of contact is often the most important and we want to make sure that each contact is productive. Families will be listened to and not judged. Staff will help families work out what can and cannot be done. A joint action plan will be one that everyone can sign up to and that sets out mutual expectations.

**Ownership of the problem** - We will aim to be a one-stop shop of support and information to help families resolve difficulties. We will support families to resolve the difficulty at the point of enquiry without referring onwards wherever possible. When other services are needed to help we will facilitate work with the family to make it happen.

**One point of contact** - This will be someone the family trusts. This person might be called a Family Champion, a Key Worker or a Lead Professional. They will work with the family and other professionals to make sure that needs are assessed and the right support put in place as quickly as possible.

**Joining up and keeping it simple** - A thorough joint assessment will form the basis for early help assessments by all partners. This will be carried out with the family to make sure that the whole family’s situation is understood and taken into account.

**Easy access to services that make a difference** - Families will be able to go to their school, GP, Children’s Centre or another trusted place of their choice and receive the right level of information, advice or support to get the help they need as quickly as possible and with the minimum of fuss. We will work to make them available close to home or in a place where families can get to them.

## 2.5 Profile

In Somerset there are 108,782 children and young people under the age of 18. The majority of these are well supported through universal services. There are, however, a number of children and families in need of further help or support. It is not straightforward to determine exactly how many would require early help, as there are a number of contributory factors, and no single measure will identify all of them.

There is often a close correlation between families in need of early help, and a range of issues such as poverty, health, and education. Relevant contextual information includes:

### Poverty/Economy

- There were 13,770 children (under 16) considered to be living in poverty in 2010. This equates to 14.9% of children. This proportion is below the national and regional figures of 21.1% and 16.6% respectively, but masks significant variations at lower geographical levels.
- There are currently 7,600 children in Somerset schools who are eligible for free school meals.
- In 2011, there were 6,071 'workless' households in Somerset with dependent children (households with no adults in employment).

### Education

- In 2011/12 there were over 2850 fixed term exclusions for children and young people, and there are approximately 3,500 children who are persistently absent (absence of over 15%).
- There are currently 580 young people in years 12-14 (aged 16-18) who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), about 4% of the age group.
- In 2011/12 the Percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A\*- C GCSEs (including English & Maths) was 56.5% which is below the national average of 58.8%. For pupils eligible for Free School Meals: 28.9% (nationally: 36.4%) and Children Looked After: 8.1% (nationally: 14.6%)

### Domestic Violence

- In 2012, there were over reported 5600 incidents of domestic violence where a child was present (Summary Incident Report notifications received by Somerset Direct from the Police).

### Children in Need

- At any point in time there are approximately 3,500 Children In Need in Somerset.
- In 2011/12 (financial year) there were 2,300 referrals to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services in Somerset.
- In the past 12 months (1st February 2012 to 31st January 2013), a total of 148 CAFs\* in their current version, have been registered, the majority carried out by Children's Centres. A further 336 Early Assessments were completed by Targeted Family Support Workers in the Early Intervention Pods (EIP) within Children's Social Care. There are in excess of 5,400 referrals to Children's Social Care each year and more than 4,400 Initial Assessments undertaken.



\*The CAF – Common Assessment Framework - provides a standardised approach for assessing needs at an early stage and deciding on what action to take. It is designed to enable practitioners across all agencies to follow the same process and achieve more consistent assessments.

## Health

- In 2012, over a fifth (23.4%) of children measured in reception year, were either overweight or obese. In Year 6, this proportion increases to one in three (31.9%).
- Somerset is significantly lower than national average for very low birth weight (<1500g) and similarly for low birth weight (<2500g). In 2011 there were 359 births (live or still) under 2500g.
- In 2010 there were 299 conceptions for girls aged under the age of 18. There is considerable geographical variation in the actual percentage across the county.

## Housing

- The number of households on the Social Housing Register in Somerset as at 18th March 2013 is 17,308.
- To date in the financial year 2012/13 there is 271 people unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

## 2.6 Early Help Strands in Somerset

The recommendations of the OFSTED Review of Somerset's Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services in 2012 outlined the following: "Ensure sufficient capacity and co-ordinated activity to deliver effective early intervention and prevention services." This recommendation provides the context for further development of multi-agency approaches to early intervention services.

Somerset's approach to early intervention services was reshaped from April 2011 with the withdrawal of Local Service Teams and a reduction in funding across a range of services. In the summer of 2011 a scoping exercise was undertaken by Somerset Children's Trust to establish what services remained in place across the County.

### The scoping exercise identified the following key services:

- The lead agency for early help is Children's Social Care with the Early Intervention Pods (CSC EI Pods) providing a range of interventions for children and families including parenting support, emotional health and well being.
- Children's Centres and Health Visitors work together with the Children's Social Care Early Intervention Pods to provide both targeted and universal services for children aged 0 to 5 and their families via the Healthy Child Programme.
- Parent & Family Support Advisers [PFSAs] who are currently managed by schools and with effect from April 2013 will also be employed by schools.
- Targeted Youth Support teams provide support for young parents, adolescents who are NEET or at risk of substance misuse or other high risk behaviours.

- Troubled Families - Since the scoping exercise was undertaken the Government has developed the Troubled Families initiative which is being delivered in collaboration with the District and Borough Councils across the county. The aim of this programme is to turn around the lives of the most troubled families across the County. The resources provided by the Government to undertake this scheme provide a significant opportunity for Somerset to improve the lives of these families and to review the approach to be taken in regard to promoting effective multi-agency support for early intervention and prevention with children and families. The pressures on all agencies at a time of reducing resources make it all the more important that services are properly focused, aligned and avoid waste and duplication.
- Over 2012-15, Children Services in Somerset are expected to work with 870 families. This figure has been divided up using the five District/ Borough Council areas. The overall targets by District are:

Mendip	160
Sedgemoor	205
South Somerset	243
Taunton Deane	182
West Somerset	80
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>870</b>

Each year a target of 33% is expected to be achieved. For example in 2012/13 Mendip is expected to work with 52 families. Success of working with a family is measured by the term 'attachment'.

- The Attachment Criteria is where it can be shown:
  - The family is identified and their eligibility for the programme confirmed
  - That someone is actively working with the family
  - There has been a triage of assessment of need
  - There is an outline plan in place to work differently with the family.
  - We can show how agencies across the public sector can work differently with the whole family.

## 3.0 Early Help Implementation and Delivery Plan

### 3.1 Priorities and Next Steps

Early help requires all staff and professionals, providers and commissioners to adopt a team around the family “Family Focus” approach. Whether based in services that focus primarily on children or on adults, this means developing an approach to moving to an outcomes framework to support delivery and measurement of early intervention services in Somerset and in:

- Assessing the needs of the whole family (children, young people and parents) as well as of individual members
- Taking steps to facilitate them solving their problems themselves
- Identifying those families that need extra help
- Putting in place a family plan that ensures access to appropriate services with families able to “step up” to a more intensive service or “step down” to a lower level of support with ease. The plans to be supported by reviews that measure outcomes and encourage greater family and individual child and young person resilience.

It will be necessary to develop a new agreed approach and protocol for early help with all partners and to agree the development of a core dataset to support the evidence and measurement of outcomes and changes as a result of a new way of working.

This will require a new approach to:

### 3.2 Strategic commissioning

- \* Understand early help needs using the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Public Health, County Council, District Council, and other needs analysis.
- \* Agree through Children’s Trust/Local Children’s Safeguarding Board/Compact strategic and commissioning priorities for early help delivery.
- \* Profile current early help spend across all agencies against interagency partnership commissioning priorities.
- \* Undertake gap analysis of current spend profile against strategic commissioning priorities to develop commissioning plan which will include commissioning, decommissioning, and re-commissioning intent for early help services.
- \* Translate early help objectives in the clear outcome measures and critical success factors.
- \* Develop outcome based service level agreements/contracts for commissioned early help services, including reward based contracts such as payment by results.
- \* Put in place arrangements to evaluate the impact of early help services, including service user feedback and evaluation.
- \* Establish multi-agency governance arrangements to oversee the implementation and evaluation of the early help strategy.

### 3.3 Identification, assessment, and support to those in need of Early Help

Develop clear multi-agency thresholds for early help reflecting the partnerships early help priorities.

- \* Develop clear pathways to ensure a smooth transition or "step up" from universal services to early help services (Tier 1 to tier 2 services), from early help services to targeted or statutory intervention (Tier 2 to 3/4 services), and for "step down" help for those moving down from statutory/targeted interventions (Tiers 3/4) to early help or universal services (Tiers 1/2).
- \* Revise with partners the Common Assessment Framework [CAF] policy as the primary early help assessment tool.
- \* Work with adult services to identify and agree joint work, improved transition arrangements, and the development of a "team around the family" approach.
- \* Develop operating arrangements for team around the family.
- \* Establish lead professional arrangements and protocols for each service area.
- \* Joint training and development of managers and frontline professionals to operate effectively:
  - thresholds
  - the CAF
  - the team around the family approach
  - lead professional arrangements and protocols
  - the use of user feedback to inform service delivery and improvement.

### 3.4 Arrangements for service delivery

- \* Develop five **Early Help Hubs** which will lead and coordinate early help prevention and intervention activity in the District and Borough Council areas. The Hubs will optimise the impact of early help activity to ensure a reduction in escalation to statutory, enforcement or specialist services.
- \* **Integrate management structures** for the early intervention pods and children centres, and provide supervision to school-based parenting family support advisers through the early intervention pods. This will enable the coordination of services utilising the team around the family approach.
- \* Ensure **Children's Centre** services are re-commissioned within the context of Somerset's early help strategy and that the new management arrangements maximise the positive outcomes for children 0-5 years and their families.
- \* Deliver the **Troubled Families Programme** providing support and challenge to 870 families in Somerset by April 2015. Use the learning from the programme to better coordinate and more effectively deliver services to the most vulnerable families.

### 3.5 Issues to be tackled

In order to maximise the opportunities for more effective multi-agency targeted interventions the following need to be undertaken:

- 1 Key agencies are brought together for a workshop session which agrees the next steps in terms of the development of a revised strategy for early help and targeted interventions.
- 2 A review with partners of the quality of current CAF assessments and their impact is undertaken with recommendations produced which inform future work.
- 3 Work with key partners to ensure that the CAF assessment form is the basis of all tier one and tier two assessment processes notably those used by PFSAs, Early Intervention PODs within Children Social Care and in the Health Visitor Family Assessment.
- 4 Ensure that services for vulnerable learners and schools (who will employ PFSAs with effect from 1st April) are involved in the development of a single assessment process.
- 5 Explore how the revised CAF and pre CAF assessment forms can be more effectively shared between agencies involved in work with families.
- 6 Adjust the CAF process to incorporate the implementation of the "Team around the Family" approach to the multi-agency delivery of services.
- 7 Relaunch the CAF as Somerset's preferred option for the assessment of the needs of children and families across all partners in The Children's Trust.
- 8 Initiate the development of five District Council based early intervention hubs which bring together the governance and management arrangements for Children's Centres and the operational and strategic groups within Districts which are leading the Troubled Families Programme.