



Derbyshire Children's Services Early Help Strategy

2022 – 2024

Stronger Families, Safer Children

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[Appendix 1: Terms of Reference for Early Help Board](#)

1. Introduction

This is the Early Help Strategy for Derbyshire Children's Services. The document sets out what Early Help is and why it is so important; not only is early help essential to the lives of millions of children, young people and families across the country, the delivery of timely early help can also save already stretched public finances.

This strategy will set out what we believe are the foundations for providing Early Help including the importance of us working closely with our partners.

The document then sets out what Derbyshire Children's Services Early Help offer looks like, and how the teams work across the County.

As partnership working is so essential to the effective Early Help, there are arrangements in place within Derbyshire to support partners with developing and delivering Early Help interventions to children, young people and families, and we will set out how that support can improve outcomes for families.

It's incredibly important that all partners working on delivering Early Help can identify children, young people and families who need Early Help – and this document sets out the levels of needs and which agencies are best placed to provide support.

Finally, at the end of the strategy is our ambitious action plan which sets out our aspirations to work with our partners on co-producing an Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy, how we want to strengthen communities to be able to deliver effective Early Help, and also how we aim to improve how we access and use data so that we're in a stronger position to support families at the earliest opportunity – before things get to crisis point.

2. What is Early Help?

In Derbyshire, our Children's Services' vision is: *'Working creatively together to inspire and empower children, young people and their families and communities to be the best they can be; safe, healthy, happy, learning and working'*.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) sets out that 'Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Early help can also prevent further problems arising'

Derbyshire's Early Help offer takes into account reports and reviews by Frank Field, Dame Clare Tickell, Graham Allen and Michael Marmot, with regards to the impact of growing up in poverty on child outcomes, use of evidence-based approaches and programmes, and the important focus on the early years given the increasing body of evidence around early attachment and baby brain development.

Derbyshire's Early Help offer seeks to identify the need for help for children, young people, and families as soon as problems or needs start to emerge, or when there is a strong likelihood that problems will emerge in the future.

We aim to support all families and professionals by providing help much earlier rather than responding when challenges have reached the level requiring statutory or specialist services.

Along with our partners, we believe that early interventions should be delivered at the earliest time to ensure a child or their family's needs do not escalate into an acute level of need.

Our Early Help offer is available for children and young people 0-19 and their families. We provide targeted support designed to reduce or prevent specific problems from escalating or becoming entrenched.

The Early Help offer also includes support for partners to enable them to develop and deliver their own early help interventions. There is also a focus on supporting community development in order to provide access to universal services.



3. Where Does Early Help Sit in Our System?

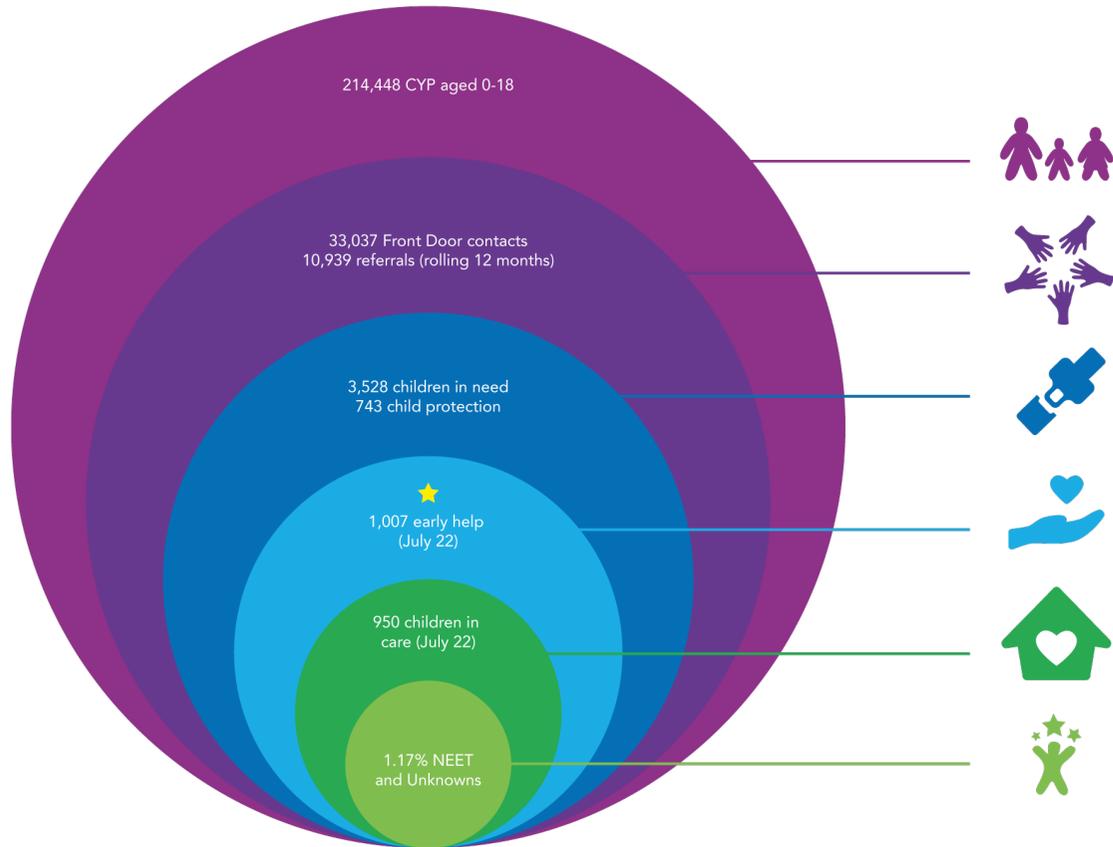
Our commitment to Early Help is central to our Children's Services Plan, relating to three priority outcomes in particular:

- Resilient, healthy and safe communities
- High performing, value for money and resident focussed services
- Effective early help for individuals and communities

Our Early Help offer is a key part of our system for improving outcomes for children, young people and families. Early help in Derbyshire plays a critical role in providing essential support, building resilience, and preventing needs from escalating.

Figure 1 below sets out where our early help offer sits in the context of our support to children, young people and families in Derbyshire.

Figure 1. Early Help in Context



Examples of our commitments

- Plans to reform the Early Help Board to ensure consistency of early help across the partnership
- Plans to co-produce Early Intervention and Prevention strategy with partners
- Ensuring partners are supported to understand threshold
- Continuing to support partners to deliver early help to reduce demand on the front door
- Supporting the work of our Social Workers by through joint working
- Supporting the transition and de-escalation of cases from targeted to universal
- Ensuring consistency of practice
- Delivering evidenced based interventions
- Sustaining improvements with Supporting Families
- Supporting children before the reach the Edge of Care
- Supporting community groups with growing and developing an offer for young people
- Sustaining the nationally recognised performance
- Continuing to work in partnership to offer young people appropriate post-16 provision

Our approach to everything we do

- We strive to work in partnership
- We value and support our staff
- We manage need and demand
- We put the child, young person and family first
- We have the highest standards in terms of Quality Assurance and performance management
- We champion the Think Family approach

4. The Four Foundations of the Early Help Offer

A strong Early Help offer that builds resilience

Across the Children's Partnership there is commitment to ensure that children get the best start in life. Agencies that make up the Children's Partnership all provide universal services to children, young people and families. The universal provision they deliver is key to building resilience in families providing them with the tools and skills to support themselves in the future. Derbyshire's Early Help Service is in place to support partners to develop and deliver early help interventions through the Early Help Advisors and the Youth and Community Engagement Workers.

Clear pathways to support

We are committed to ensuring that families receive the targeted support when they need it. We work to ensure that families understand that initial Early Help is provided by those who know the child or young person the best – and that is likely to be our universal partners. We also work with the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership to ensure that partners are clear on their responsibilities to provide early help – and we are committed to providing support to them to deliver this.

Joining up how we work

It's important that families experience consistency with assessment, planning and support. We follow the guidance of the Derby City and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership in using the Early Help Assessment and Team Around the Family process across the partnership.

Supporting the whole family

We aim to provide support that responds to the needs of the whole family and we therefore use a 'Think Family' approach across all casework within the Early Help Teams. We work with families to recognise and celebrate their strengths in order to build resilience. Family members are engaged at every stage and their experiences will help shape and improve services.

5. How Do We Deliver Early Help?

There are six locality Early Help Teams in Derbyshire who deliver targeted support to children, young people and families with an intensive level of need.

Each of the Early Help Teams offer the following:

- **Children's Centres teams** who work closely with health visitors and early years providers. Children's Centres provide a targeted core offer around child development, school readiness and parenting support.
- **Individual family support** focussed on parenting, improved routines and relationships, and reducing conflict
- **Targeted youth support** focussed on family relationships, reducing conflict, healthy lifestyle choices and reducing risks of exploitation
- **Undertaking parenting assessments** and supporting the delivery of family time

Our targeted Early Help offer is available to vulnerable children and families and it is accessed through Starting Point via the completion of an online early help request form.

Requests will be triaged, and the locality early help teams will work with local partners to provide the most appropriate level of support.

Interventions delivered by the Early Help Teams are underpinned by Derbyshire's 'Stronger Families, Safer Children' operating model.

Stronger Families, Safer Children provides an evidenced based framework to support improved outcomes for children, young people and families.

The model is strengths-based focussing on positives, strengths and safety aspects in the family in order to deliver sustained changes.

Stronger Families, Safer Children:

- Uses a family focused approach where everybody is listened to, with the child placed first
- Respectful, inclusive and empowers families and children to participate
- Uses a solution focussed, strength-based model that is clear about the risks and worries
- Uses straightforward, clear, jargon free language that is understood and shared, and all involved are accountable for
- Is collaborative approach with the family and partner agencies
- Promotes honest, positive and productive working relationships with families
- Empowers front line practitioners to analyse the impact of adverse childhood experiences on the child / children
- Enables families to make lasting change through achievable tasks
- Encourages workers to 'think critically', remain curious and respond creatively to change
- Promotes the use of evidence-based interventions including the Solihull Parenting Programme, Non-Violent Resistance (NVR), Every Child a Talker

In 2012 the government launched the Troubled Families programme in response to the civil unrest seen up and down the country. Now referred to as Supporting Families, this programme aims to support children, young people and families with targeted support around specific criteria:

- Getting a good education
- Good early years development
- Improved mental and physical health
- Reduced harmful substance misuse
- Improved family relationships
- Children safe from abuse and exploitation
- Preventing and tackling crime
- Safe from domestic abuse
- Secure housing
- Financial stability

All support delivered through the Early Help Teams to families considers the above criteria in order to provide a tailored package of help. Over the past two years Derbyshire has met 100% of its targets for the Supporting Families programme.

6. How Do We Work With Our Partners Around Early Help?

In Derbyshire partner agencies can access support and guidance around all aspects of Early Help from the Early Help Development Team. This team can work alongside any partner working with child, young person or family living in Derbyshire to develop and deliver their approach to providing Early Help. Across each of the localities is a team of Early Help Advisors can provide:

- information advice and signposting
- support, mentoring and training around undertaking Early Help Assessment and Team Around the Family meetings
- advice on practice and early help approaches
- connections to appropriate community services
- workforce development through role modelling

Currently, around 85% of the work of Early Help Development Team is with schools and other education settings. The team offers regular briefing sessions on areas like:-

- Children at Risk of Exploitation (CRE)
- Genograms / Ecomaps
- Early Help Assessment (EHA)/TAFs
- The use of chronologies
- Graded Care Profile
- Understanding Thresholds
- Voice of the child

Derby City and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership recommend that all agencies working with children, young people and families use the Early Help Assessment when there is evidence of emerging needs (more details on this are in the next section: Identifying children and families who would benefit from early help). Each professional in regular contact with the child (which may include schools, nursery, health visitors, school health, etc.) is able to work with the family to undertake the assessment – so where a child or family has an emerging level of need, our partners are able to offer support.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) guidance also emphasises how important Early Help is in promoting the welfare of children, together with clear arrangements for partners working together in the best interests of the family. We want to ensure that our early help offer reflects the ambitions of this guidance and the guidance of the Safeguarding Children Board.

Moving forward, we will focus on strengthening our multi-agency and partnership approach to Early Help in Derbyshire. This will be a key focus of our Early Help Board and the work this Board will steer to develop a comprehensive Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy (see Section 8: Governing delivery and performance of Early Help).



7. Identifying Children and Families Who Would Benefit From Early Help

Guidance from Derby City and Derbyshire Safeguarding children Partnership around threshold levels for interventions from across the Children's Partnership is central to Derbyshire's Early Help offer.

The Threshold Document sets out the four levels of need relating to children, young people and their families, and also sets out where the help to meet these needs should come from.



Level 1 Universal Open Access provision

All unborn babies, children and young people will receive Universal Services, however, some children, either because of their needs or circumstances will require extra support from these services to be healthy and safe and to achieve their potential. Universal and individual agencies will be able to take swift action within their services to address these low level needs.

Level 2 Emerging Needs

Unborn babies, children and young people with Emerging Needs are likely to require coordinated support from more than one agency. These services should work together to agree what extra help may be needed to support an unborn baby, child, or young person at an early stage. There is no need for intensive or specialist services to be involved. A Lead practitioner from one of the agencies providing support will coordinate the actions identified in the assessment process.

Level 3 Intensive Needs

Unborn babies, children, and young people whose needs are more complex, including vulnerable children and those who have a complex disability and /or special education needs may need more intensive support.

Prior to requesting services at level 3 Intensive, partner agency practitioners are expected to have worked with the family within at Level 2 (emerging needs) before making a referral to Children's Services.

The evidence of this work would be provided within a new or updated Early Help Assessment or Team Around the Family plan which sets out the concerns of the family and the involved agencies.

Where the threshold is met for intensive support, it will be offered a locality Early Help Team or Children's Social Care. The lead practitioner for intensive support will usually be from Early Help or Social Care.

Level 4 Specialist

Unborn babies, children, young people, and families whose needs are complex and enduring will need more specialist support. More than one service is normally involved, with all practitioners involved on a statutory basis and a qualified Social Worker as the professional lead. It is usually the local authority Children's Social Care service which acts as the lead agency.

Derbyshire's early help offer therefore puts the responsibility on all professionals to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs for individual children and families. The professionals working mainly in universal services are best placed to identify children or their families, who are at risk of poor outcomes. These will be in health services, such as health visitors, GPs, and school nurses, or in early years settings, nurseries or in education provision at any age from early years onwards. All professionals can initiate an Early Help Assessment and lead the Team Around the family processes, with access to 'Starting Point' when needed.

8. Governing Delivery and Performance of Early Help

Established two years ago, our Early Help Board has focussed on how Children's Services have delivered early help to children, young people and families.

Moving forward we are keen to work with our partners to reform the Early Help Board to drive an increasingly effective multi-agency approach to Early Help, in order to ensure that children, young people, and families receive the help they need at the earliest opportunity to ensure issues do not escalate into an acute level of need in order to deliver positive outcomes.

The reformed Early Help Board will work to identify and respond to any gaps in service provision across Derbyshire, work to strengthen partnership working, and provide robust challenge to meet the needs of children, young people, and families. The Board will also oversee delivery of the key priorities and actions which follow in the section below. Terms of Reference for the Early Help Board are attached as Appendix 1.

Our aim is for the Early Help Board to oversee the delivery of the priorities identified in the following section focussed around the development and co-production of Derbyshire's multi-agency Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy. Work on this Strategy is currently underway and will complete within the next 12 months. Once the Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy is in place, the strategic direction for our Early Help offer will sit within the framework of that strategy, along with all other key components of early intervention support in Derbyshire.

Priority 1. Embed the Early Help Approach Across the Partnership

Rationale

The responsiveness to emerging needs and the delivery of early help to children, young people and families is the responsibility of all agencies – and this requires strong, effective, and joined up partnership working between services. Partners are committed and invested in early help but there is a need for more coordination and planning of services, greater accountability for the provision of earlier help, and a partnership wide strategy focussed on the delivery of sustainable improvement.

Aims

- Strengthen systems to ensure children are supported at the earliest opportunity to minimise their chances of coming into care
- Develop a consistent partnership approach to ensure all children's needs are met
- Ensure more partners can use the Early Help Assessment with families
- Provide earlier help to reduce pressures on Social Care teams
- Ensure consistency of quality assurance of early help practice across the partnership
- Understand the impact of interventions delivered to children, young people and families
- Improve processes in relation to the Vulnerable Children's Meetings
- Increase the number of families supported with earlier help across the partnership
- Improve and strengthen partners' practice in relation to the delivery of early help interventions
- Improve the quality of early help provision

Actions

1. Collectively review partner arrangements for the delivery of early help
2. Map the early help provision from partners
3. Provide opportunities for partners to be briefed on early help developments
4. Work to ensure that school based early help teams have the opportunity for good quality supervision
5. Develop an agreed culture and vision for the children's partnership on early help
6. Engage all stakeholders in co-producing a robust early intervention and prevention strategy
7. Review the consistency and quality of case transition arrangements within Children's Services
8. Include partnership early help cases as part of the Supporting Families programme in Derbyshire
9. Review the arrangement and terms of reference for the Early Help Board
10. Work with partners on the government's Family Hubs agenda to provide earlier help to families
11. Develop a system to measure impact and distance travelled before and after an intervention

Deliverables

- A co-produced, cross-partnership Early Help and Intervention Strategy by March 2024
- Partner caseloads included in the Supporting Families programme by March 2024
- Relaunch of Supporting Families programme by October 2022
- Stronger Families, Safer Children training to be made available to partners by January 2023
- System in place to measure the impact an early help has had on a child, young person or family through benchmarking and post-intervention evaluation by March 2023
- Consistent quality assurance framework for partner agency cases to be in place by March 2024
- Family Hubs Pilot for Derbyshire by October 2024
- Early Help staff embedded within each of the County's Thriving Communities projects supporting their development with partners by January 2023

Success Measures

- Independent evaluation of partnership wide early help offer by July 2023
- 100% of Supporting Families claims target is met
- 30% of Supporting Families cases are from partner agency supported cases by July 2024
- Overall number of families receiving early help across the partnership has increased by July 2024
- Overall number of children in care in Derbyshire has reduced by July 2024

Priority 2. Community Owned and Developed Early Help

Rationale

The provision of universal early help to children, young people and families is essential in building resilience in families. Investing in communities to ensure they have the tools to offer sustainable early help will mean families are more able to help themselves and have their needs met at the earliest opportunity. All agencies providing early help need to build strong relationships with children, young people, and families to ensure their views, ideas and concerns are heard, ensure they can shape provision and approaches used and to ensure they are part of future governance arrangements.

Aims

- Support the development of sustainable and thriving communities so they can provide earlier help
- Support communities with the recruitment of volunteers to provide universal groups and activities for children, young people, and families
- Work with health colleagues to establish universal support for women struggling with or at risk of post-natal depression
- Support community groups and individuals with growing and developing an offer for young people
- Develop systems to seek and respond to feedback from children, young people, and families about their experiences of early help interventions
- Use feedback from children, young people, and families to inform service planning

Actions

1. Head of Service Early Help Play an active and participative role in the Thriving Communities Board Meetings
2. Map the provision of community help and support, and to work with the Locality Children's Partnerships to identify gaps in provision
3. Early Help Development Officers to work with local communities to develop young people led youth forums
4. Youth forums to be actively consulted on strengths and gaps around provision in their communities
5. Questionnaire / survey to be developed to be sent out to families following case closure on their experience
6. Youth and Community Engagement Workers to be linked as facilitators within Thriving Communities projects
7. Ensure that the views of young people are reflected within the redesigned Early Help Board
8. Youth and Community Engagement Workers promote the Derbyshire Grants programme

Deliverables

- Early Help staff embedded within each of the County's Thriving Communities projects supporting their development with partners by January 2023
- Community Directory enhanced and updated to reflect all community provision for children, young people and families by January 2023
- A network of youth forums established by March 2023
- Surveys sent to all children, young people and families post-intervention seeking their views by March 2023
- Sustainment of Training Provider Networks to ensure young people are connected with appropriate post-16 opportunities

Success Measures

- Increase in the groups in receipt of Derbyshire Grants by July 2023
- Increase in the number of universal groups available for children, young people, and families by July 2023
- Increase in the numbers of families accessing the Community Directory by October 2023
- Sustainment of 1.5% of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training, or whose educational destination is unknown by August 2023

Priority 3. Information Sharing and Governance

Rationale

Good quality data and access to robust management information is essential in providing the partnership with oversight on how early help is performing across Derbyshire.

An effective data governance board is needed which is accountable for progress on data transformation. It will support 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 needs to be used by the partnership to support resourcing, planning, whole family working and early intervention. We will look to ensure an identified member of the Children's Services Senior Leadership team has responsibility for driving forward actions from this board.

Aims

- Develop a data governance board which will feed into the wider Early Help Board
- The board will help drive data transformation and provide direction on how data should be used to ensure effective services and help unlock data sharing issues
- Ensure regular data feeds from all parts of the partnership to support whole family working
- Develop a system to allow us to pull together and analyse data from across the partnership to forecast where needs are greatest – and to target support in these areas
- Use data from across the partnership to inform commissioning, operational delivery and workforce development

Actions

1. Work with the Police, Housing providers, district and borough councils, health, and schools including academies to develop information sharing agreements in order to identify and support children, young people and families with earlier help
2. Learn from other local authority areas how they have adopted one case management system across the partnership

Deliverables

- A data governance board in place and operational by October 2023
- Information sharing agreement with Police in place by July 2023

Success Measures

- Increase in the use of data to inform partnership priorities by July 2024
- Increase in the number of information sharing agreements in place with Derbyshire County Council by July 2024

Derbyshire Early Help Board

Draft Terms of Reference

July 2022

Local organisations and agencies should have in place effective ways to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs of individual children and families. Local authorities should work with organisations and agencies to develop joined-up early help services based on a clear understanding of local needs. This requires all practitioners, including those in universal services and those providing services to adults with children, to understand their role in identifying emerging problems and to share information with other practitioners to support early identification and assessment.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)

Local authorities have a responsibility to promote inter-agency co-operation to improve the welfare of all children.

Section 10 [5] of the Children Act 2004

Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Early help can also prevent further problems arising.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)

Role and purpose

Derbyshire's Early Help Board is in place to ensure that children, young people, and families receive the help they need at the earliest opportunity to ensure issues do not escalate into an acute level of need in order to deliver positive outcomes.

The Early Help Board will work to identify and respond to any gaps in service provision, work to strengthen partnership working, and provide robust challenge to meet the needs of children, young people, and families.

The Early Help Board will oversee the delivery of the priorities within the Early Help Strategy and the Early Help System Guide and will work to develop Derbyshire's Early Intervention and Prevention strategy.

Membership

- Executive Director of Children's Services
- Service Director Early Help and Safeguarding
- Service Director for Schools and Learning
- Assistant Director Early Help and Safeguarding
- Assistant Director for Education Improvement
- Head of Service Early Help
- Head of Service Locality
- General Manager, Children's Community Services, DCHS
- Commissioning Manager, Public Health
- Strategic Lead for All Children Receiving an Education
- Child Protection Manager for Schools
- Representation from Voluntary, Community and Independent Sector
- Representation from Derbyshire Constabulary
- Representation from Derbyshire Fire & Rescue
- Representation from Derbyshire Schools (suggestion one school per locality)

- Head of Early Years
- Supporting Families Lead
- Management Information Officer
- Commissioning Manager, ICS

Chairing

The Early Help Board will be chaired independently of the Local Authority (this does not apply to the Vice Chair).

Administration

The Early Help Board will be supported by a member of Derbyshire's Business Services. Business Services will distribute the agenda at least 14 days in advance of the meeting. Business Services will take notes at the meeting and ensure that the minutes adequately reflect the actions Board Members will take forward.

Frequency of meetings

Meetings will take place bi-monthly.

Role of Members

- Act as a champion for children, young people and families
- Be accountable for moving forward actions related to own areas of work
- Commitment to attend and engage in Board meetings and to provide challenge and support as required
- Lead on specific projects which may involve acting as chair for a specific time-limited task and finish group
- Be committed to quality assurance
- Represent the views of own organisation
- Champion Derbyshire's operating model 'Stronger Families, Safer Children'
- Champion the Think Family approach
- Cascade learning from Serious Care Reviews, and Serious Incident Learning Reviews back to respective organisations
- Communicate any achievements, areas of good practice, issues and challenges back to respective organisations
- Contribute to the development of a cross partnership co-produced Early Intervention and Prevention strategy
- Review the Terms of Reference for the Early Help Board on an annual basis

Priorities – 2022/2024

Co-produce an Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy

To ensure consistency of practice across all agencies delivering early help

For all agencies to champion the Supporting Families priorities

Develop a system to measure the impact of early help interventions across the partnership

Develop a system to gather the views of all children, young people and families on their experience of receiving early help interventions from partners

Commission an independent evaluation of early help across the partnership

Develop a data governance board to feed into the Early Help Board – driving forward data transformation to support whole family working