



EARLY HELP IN WARWICKSHIRE

**PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY
2018 - 2023**



Foreword

We know that there is so much good work going on to support children, young people, families and communities throughout Warwickshire, ranging from our universal services (available to all) to our safeguarding and specialist services for the most vulnerable.

But we also understand there is a need to change. Resources are shrinking and demand for our most specialist and expensive services is growing with increasing complexity. It is more crucial than ever that we come together in partnership to focus on the support we can give to families and communities at the earliest opportunity.

- We need a common vision, a common understanding and a common language about what this means here in Warwickshire.
- We need to have excellent information and advice available to all through our universal services, so that risks and vulnerabilities can be prevented from turning into problems and needs.
- We need to build on the strengths within families and communities to ensure they are resilient and able to support themselves and each other, without the need for avoidable intervention.
- We need to ensure that those who do need our help are able to receive it easily and quickly, before their problems have a chance to worsen.
- We need to continue to support families after we have helped them, to ensure they are able to manage their own difficulties and their problems do not return to a higher level of need.

The key to doing this effectively lies in our partnership work. We have a shared commitment to working together across our agencies and in partnership with families and communities to deliver this vision.

Our shared commitment comes hand in hand with a shared accountability.

This strategy has been written for all professionals working with children, young people and families, but it is informed by the views of parents and professionals alike. We will not stop here. We will continue to review and develop our strategy in partnership with those best placed to tell us what's working and what needs to change in the months and years to come.

Elaine Coleridge-Smith,
Chair of the Warwickshire
Safeguarding Children Board.



What is Early Help?

We asked parents what early help means to them...



“Early should mean early and help should mean help.”

“Prompt, proactive, accessible and professional help, support and advice for children and families as soon as they need it.”

“Prevention rather than a cure.”

“Access to services as soon as a need is identified.”

It includes both the “kind of things every parent is doing” and “help for specific concerns.”

“Being the support network or ‘village’ that [families] need.”

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)

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; for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care, or in families where there are emerging parental mental health issues or drug and alcohol misuse.

The right support at the right time

In Warwickshire, early help is summarised as the right support at the right time. The right support means understanding and building a family’s strengths and needs and quickly identifying the most appropriate help for them. It also means helping parents to have the confidence to seek their own solutions. The right time means early in the development of the problem, which could be at any point in the child’s life. The right support at the right time will reduce the likelihood of problems escalating or recurring.

Effective early help relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to:

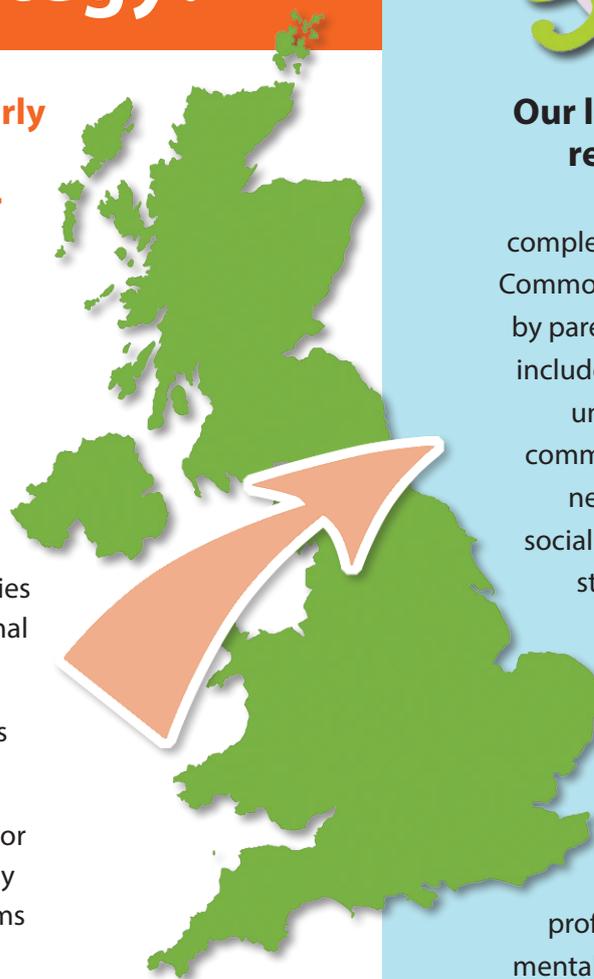
- identify children and families who would benefit from early help
- undertake an assessment of the need for early help
- provide targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to improve the outcomes for the child

Local authorities, under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, have a responsibility to promote inter-agency co-operation to improve the welfare of all children.

Why do we need an early help strategy?

National research tells us that early help is worth investing in. Its long-term impact is better for families, services and the public purse.

- Frank Field (2010). Report into the prevention of child poverty.
- C4EO (2010). Grasping the Nettle report into early intervention.
- Graham Allen (2011). Children and families need to be empowered with an 'emotional bedrock' of resilience.
- Eileen Munro (2011). Focus on the 'child's journey'.
- Action for Children (2017). Revolving Door report into missed opportunities for early help, which lead to escalation of problems and re-referral.
- Action for Children, National Children's Bureau and The Children's Society (2017). Turning the Tide report on reducing funds versus increasing demand.



Smart Start

Our local Smart Start research 2015–16

complements these findings. Common themes highlighted by parents and professionals included the need for better universal services in the community so that those in need of a little advice or social interaction didn't feel stigmatised as being 'in need'. Respondents also wanted more universal parenting education, respectful and welcoming relationships with professionals, better early mental health support and a more joined-up approach across agencies. Family support services were highly valued by parents and professionals alike.

Recent inspections in Warwickshire have highlighted some effective practice. However, they have also identified areas for development. Our early help strategy needs to ensure that these good practices move from being the exception to the norm and that they are being applied consistently across agencies, areas and families.

- Not all children and families get the help they need at the right time.
- Not all partners understand or are engaged in early help.
- Thresholds for stepping up or down from early help are not always understood or consistently applied.
- Documentation and language around early help needs to be simpler.
- The voice of the child is not always reflected in assessments or used to inform future plans.



Our Ofsted inspection in May 2017

reported that Warwickshire children's services require improvement to become good.

We asked a group of parents what is currently good about early help in Warwickshire and what needs to improve. Their comments tell us that services are not working together consistently.

The experience from the families' perspective, therefore, is often disjointed and repetitive. Our early help strategy needs to change this.



What's good?



- ✓ Good multiagency working in the early years between health visiting, children's centres and nurseries.
- ✓ Easy access to universal services.
- ✓ Great facilities – welcoming and equipped.
- ✓ Praise for staff and volunteers – “some amazing people.”
- ✓ Many agencies doing a great job in the face of challenging budget cuts.

What's not so good?



- ✗ Feeling like “one size fits all” rather than help tailored to individual need.
- ✗ Help for teens is harder to navigate than help for 0–5s.
- ✗ Help can be “fragmented” and families have to “start from scratch” with each new service.
- ✗ Services don't always acknowledge that “struggles happen in a context” and aren't ready to support subsequent issues that are identified.

What does this strategy need to change?



- Make sure we only have to tell our story once.
- Help us to navigate the various systems rather than passing us on.
- Listen to us and respect the journey we've had so far.
- Understand the strengths and needs of our particular family rather than categorising us.
- “Hold my hand” and show me what support I can get.

A survey of professionals across partner agencies prior to Warwickshire's peer review of early help in 2017 told us that, overall, professionals know when and how an Early Help Pathway to Change Plan should be completed, but that thresholds, procedures, pathways and guidance need to be much clearer. This strategy needs to be the first step towards improving this for professionals and families alike.

2018: Where are we now?

Our children and families

- There are 125,554 children and young people aged 0–19 resident in Warwickshire.
- 82,062 pupils are on roll at Warwickshire maintained schools.
- There are 64,973 households in the county with dependent children.

Early Help: Pathway to Change

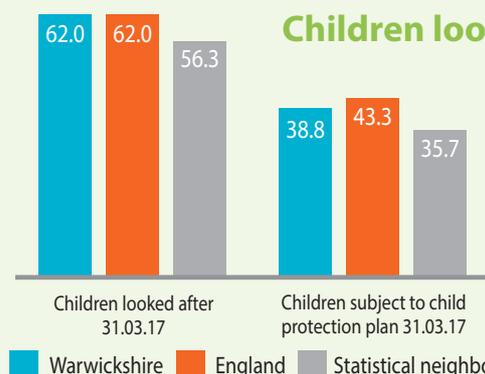
- Around 1,000 Early Help Pathway to Change Assessments are initiated each year
- Almost 2,000 are open to the service at any point in time

Children in Need

(2018 figures are provisional until 31.07.18)

- There were **10,750** referrals to the Multiagency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) during the year ending 31 March 2018.
- There are **564** children subject to a child protection plan (**49.8** per 10,000 child population).
- There are **711** children looked after in the county (**62.8** per 10,000 child population). This includes **61** unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- Excluding the asylum-seeking children, the most common reasons for children being looked after are abuse or neglect (**58.6%**), family dysfunction (**22.2%**) and family in acute stress (**9.8%**).
- In addition to those with child protection plans and children looked after, **2,618** children have an open child in need plan (**231** per 10,000 child population).

Data sources: ONS mid-2016 population estimates; Pupil Census January 2018; National Census 2011; Children & Families One Team dataset; Mosaic database. Please note: Safeguarding figures for the year ending 31 March 2018 are provisional while quality checks are completed before submission to the Department for Education.



High rates

of children looked after and children subject to child protection plans when compared with similar authorities (per 10,000 child population)

A challenging future ahead

Increasing demand...

Figures from the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ACDS) project that between 2010 and 2022, we will see nationally:

- More than a **30%** rise in education, health and care plans
- A **180%** increase in child protection enquiries
- A **56%** rise in child protection plans
- A **20%** increase in children in care

...versus reducing budgets

The Turning the Tide report (2017) projects a 29% real terms reduction in central government funding for local authority early intervention between 2016/17 and 2019/20.



Please reassure us

Our consultation group of parents wanted us to understand the uncertainty and concern caused by the significant changes and cuts that have happened in recent years. They felt that listening, talking and reassurance were the best first steps towards building family and community resilience in these challenging times.



£16.6bn

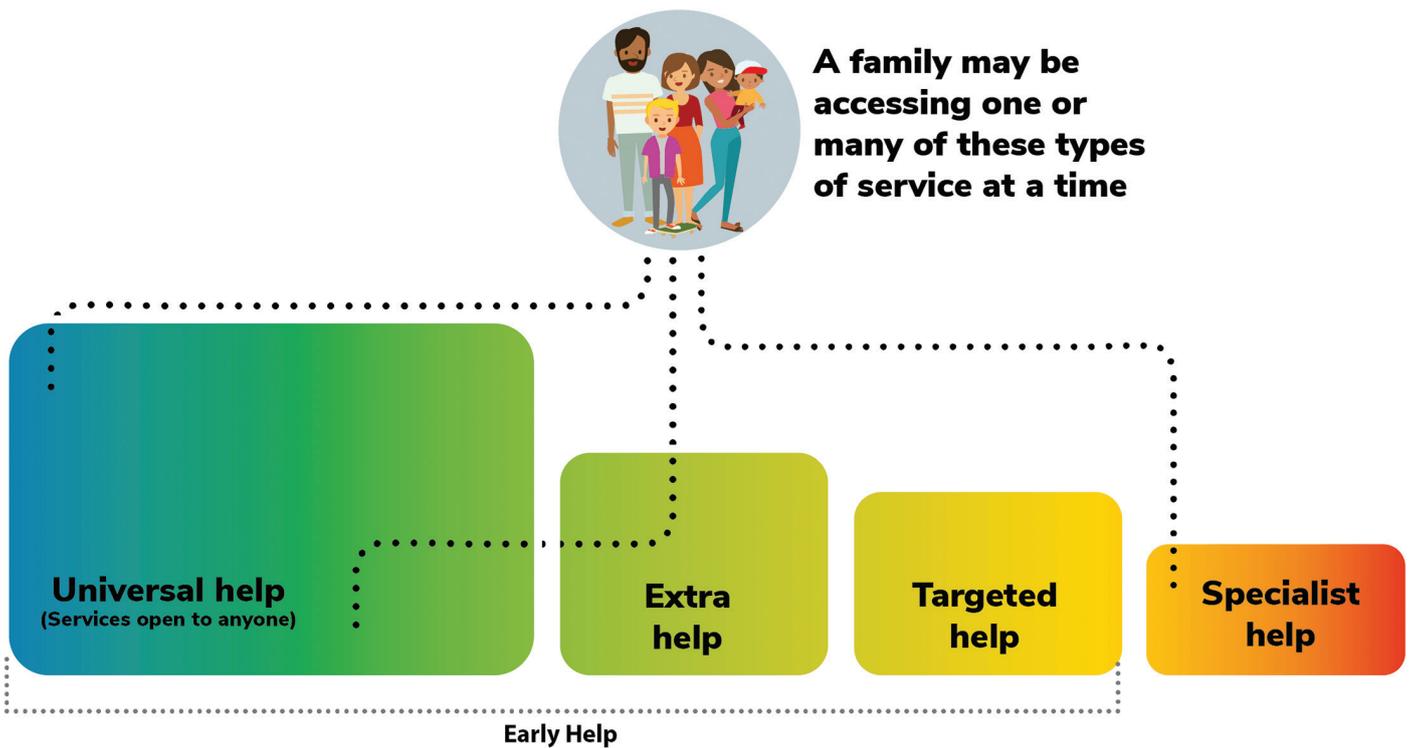
The cost of 'late help' in the UK in one year, as reported by the Early Intervention Foundation (2015). **£5bn** of this is the cost of looking after children in care; **£4bn** is spent on benefits for 18–24-year-olds not in education, employment or training; and **£900m** is spent on helping young people suffering from mental health, drug or alcohol problems.

Our strategy commits us to investing in early help, with a view to avoiding the need for what is deemed 'late help' in the future. This is balanced against the need to protect and care for those who do need our specialist services.

Where do we want to be?

A clear Early Help pathway for practitioners and users

Professionals across partner agencies in Warwickshire are already working towards a coordinated model for delivering children's and family services. The diagram below seeks to encapsulate the approach that will be taken in Warwickshire and will be used as a basis for developing a clear and understandable pathway for practitioners and users of the service.



We asked parents how they like to access early help

- Health visitor
- Children's centre/family centre
- GP if appropriate
- Online peer support groups
- School or other educational setting
- Single phone number
- Email option for sensitive issues

Our strategy will ensure there is a range of access points to early help within local communities. Information, advice and guidance will be easy to find and understand, so that families are empowered to make choices and changes for themselves. If they do need more support, we will make it easy to find out who they need to talk to.

How will we get there?



The right support



at the right time

Our commitments

We are clear

- ✓ **We will** clarify our thresholds, assessment protocols and referral pathways and communicate these so that there is a common understanding across agencies and families.
- ✓ **We will** clarify what we, as agencies and partners, expect from one another, and that we know what our responsibilities are.



We listen

- ✓ **We will** understand the needs of the child within the context of their family and community, rather than seeing them in isolation.
- ✓ **We will** review our early help based on the impact it has on the child, rather than being led by service capacity or boundaries.
- ✓ **We will** continue to engage with and listen to children, families and communities as our strategy and services develop.
- ✓ **We will** listen to research and evidence to help us understand what's working and not working here and elsewhere.



We are accessible

- ✓ **We will** develop our service directory, online offer and Family Information Service to ensure that information is easily accessible for families and professionals.
- ✓ **We will** think about pathways from the family's perspective and ask them to help us with this.



We support

- ✓ **We will** work with children, families and communities to build capacity to support themselves. We will help them look at strengths and assets to help build resilience that is sustainable.
- ✓ **We will** build and maintain relationships with families so they feel supported and assured.



We work as a team

- ✓ We will strengthen our partnership arrangements at both strategic and local practice levels, including options for joint commissioning.
- ✓ We will hold each other to account through strengthened governance arrangements across the partnership.
- ✓ We will address structures to ensure services are designed with our shared vision in mind, rather than being service-led.
- ✓ We will develop our vision for integrated working within communities through children and family centres and local hubs, building on the work already started for 0–5s through Smart Start.
- ✓ We will promote the culture change that this will involve, through shared training, support and regular peer discussions about the practical application of this strategy.



We will have the right conversations with the right people at the right time

- ✓ We will make our access points clear so families know who they can talk to for help or information.
- ✓ We will talk to each other so that families don't have to tell their story to multiple people multiple times.
- ✓ We will train and communicate with professionals in children and family centres and local family hubs, educational settings and community health services, so they know where to find help or information for families who need it.
- ✓ We will guide families through their next steps if they need support, rather than just 'signposting'.
- ✓ We will quickly refer families to safeguarding or specialist help if they need it.

How will we know whether we are getting it right?



What children and families will say

- **I understand** what early help means in Warwickshire.
- **I can** find the information I need about services and help.
- **I know** where to go if I need help.
- **I feel** listened to and respected by professionals I talk to.
- **I understand** the process I need to go through to get the help I need.
- **I understand** what will happen after I have received help.
- **I was** part of my Early Help: Pathway to Change.
- **I feel** better equipped to manage my family's problems now I have had guidance or help.



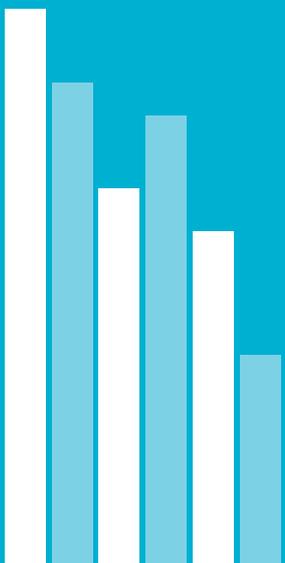
What professionals and partners will say

- **I understand** what early help means in Warwickshire.
- **I understand** my role in the locality where I work.
- **I know** when and how to complete an Early Help: Pathway to Change.
- **I know** where to find guidance and procedures relating to early help and safeguarding.
- **I understand** the guidance, procedures and thresholds relating to early help and safeguarding.
- **I know** the local assets available to help support children and families



What our numbers will say

- Fewer children are looked after and fewer have child protection plans.
- More Early Help Pathway to Change Plan are initiated, particularly by health professionals.
- Fewer re-referrals are made to early help and safeguarding.
- Savings targets are achieved.
- Targets relating to specific family interventions are met.
- Fewer children require other specialist services, such as Youth Justice and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).



Jargon Buster

Accessible	When services are accessible, it means people can easily find them, reach them and use them. When documents are accessible, it means people can easily read them, understand them and use them.
Accountability	Accountability shows whose job it is to do something. They can be held to account for that action.
Assets	Assets are the existing strengths of people and places. An asset-based approach involves identifying, using and building on these to enhance outcomes for an individual or family.
Children and family centres	Children and family centres are being developed across Warwickshire to deliver a range of services for families under one roof within local communities. They will encompass many of the existing children's centre services for 0–5s but will extend to support families with children up to the age of 19.
Child protection plan	If a child is found to be in significant need of protection due to abuse or neglect, a child protection plan is put in place. The plan includes details of what the family and professionals need to do in order to protect the child's safety, welfare and health.
Children in need	A child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired, without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled (WT p.18)
Children looked after	Children looked after are also referred to as looked after children or children in care. It means they are in the care of the local authority, either under a legal order (where the authority takes on parental responsibility) or voluntarily (usually shorter term, where the parent retains responsibility). Looked after children are placed in foster care where possible, but can also live in specialist residential placements depending on their needs.
Commissioning	Commissioning is the whole process of researching, planning, developing, ordering and buying something. In the context of this strategy, it usually relates to one organisation commissioning services from another. Joint commissioning is about organisations getting together to commission services.
Communities	Communities are where people feel they belong. This strategy largely relates to the local area in which people live, but it can also mean the groups and networks to which people belong, or where they feel they belong.
Early help	Early help means providing support to a child and their family as soon as a problem emerges. This can happen at any point in the child's life, not just in the early years. Early help can reduce the risk of problems getting worse or returning later down the line. In Warwickshire, early help is summarised as 'the right support at the right time'.
Early Help: Pathway to Change.	If more than just information and guidance are needed, a family may be asked to work through an Early Help: Pathway to Change. Any professional can lead this (e.g. teacher or health visitor) but it can't happen without the family's agreement or participation. The assessment helps professionals to understand the problem(s) faced by the family so they can help them get the right support.
Evidence	Evidence is proving what works and what doesn't work about support for families. It is about properly measuring how we know we've made a difference. We gather evidence ourselves through our own services and use evidence from others.
Integration	When services properly join up to manage and deliver services, this is called integration. It is about more than just working in the same building or talking to each other.
Intervention	Intervention is about putting a particular service or plan in place to help a family get through their problems. An intervention will be short to medium term and will involve a plan for what happens when the intervention finishes. It could be something like attending a course or going through a specified programme of support.
Late help	Late help is often what is needed if opportunities for early help are missed or are ineffective. Late help means that problems have got worse and the support the family needs is more critical, specialist and expensive.
Measures	Measures are used to tell how well we're doing. They can be quantitative (numbers) or qualitative (descriptive). The best way of measuring performance is to have a mix of both
Multiagency/ multidisciplinary	When a team consists of professionals from more than one agency or more than one skill, they are known as being multiagency or multidisciplinary.

Needs	Needs are about what is holding a child or family back from thriving to their potential. Needs can be met if the right support is provided.
Partnerships	Partnership is often about agencies working together with each other, but it can also be about agencies working together with families.
Pathways	Pathways are the journeys families and professionals take through services. They are about how services and systems are initially accessed, and about the people, places and decisions that are made along the way.
Policies & Procedures	Policies and procedures are about how the strategy will be delivered in practice. Procedures may include mapping pathways as above.
Prevention	Prevention is about stopping problems from happening in the first place. It comes at an even earlier stage than most 'early help'. Prevention includes things like general health promotion, universal parenting courses and internet safety guidance.
Professionals	Any trained member of staff working with a family is included as a professional within this strategy. It includes those from social care, education and health disciplines, as well as those delivering other family services within communities.
Resilience	Resilience means the ability to bounce back from setbacks, adapt to change, and feel equipped to deal with one's own problems.
Restorative Practice	Whilst traditional methods of conflict solution start by seeking blame and administering punishment, restorative solutions start by seeking understanding. Restorative practice is a way of behaving rather than a theory or process. Restorative practice offers a chance to rebuild relationships that have been broken, giving everybody a chance to explain their actions and building solutions together for the future.
Right Support	The right support means understanding a family's problem and quickly identifying the most appropriate help for them.
Right time	The right time means early in the development of the problem, which could be at any point in the child's life.
Safeguarding	Safeguarding in this context is about protecting the safety and welfare of children. It includes child protection and looked after children, as well as identifying risks to safety and welfare early in their development.
Service directory	Warwickshire has a searchable online directory of services and resources.
Smart Start	Smart Start is Warwickshire's strategy for supporting 0–5s and their families to get the best start in life. Early help is a significant part of this, and equally, the Smart Start strategy forms a strong basis for developing our early help strategy.
Specialist services	Specialist services are those provided to address the most critical needs. They include safeguarding, mental health, and drug and alcohol services.
Stepped Approval	The stepped approach, shown on page 8 of this strategy, is Warwickshire's recognised model of service delivery, ranging from universal provision to the most specialist services.
Strategy	A strategy is a high-level document outlining a vision for where we want to be and how we want to work.
Support	Support for families usually just means a helping hand so that they can then go on to manage difficulties themselves. It includes advice and guidance and might stretch to some lower-level interventions. Support will also be given following an intervention, so that families are not just left to themselves immediately.
Targeted services	Targeted services come in between early help and specialist services. The need for targeted services might come to light during an Early Help Pathway to Change Plan. Targeted services focus on a specific need, sometimes only for a specific period of time. They include services like family mediation programmes, intensive family support, equipment or adaptations for a child with disabilities, or a particular youth development programme.
Thresholds	Thresholds are the different criteria set in place to help professionals assess what 'the right support' means for a child and their family.
Universal	Universal means something that is available for everyone. Examples are schools, public information, and GP surgeries. It also includes any other support people can access without being assessed, e.g. an open parenting course or a workshop on family budgeting.
Vulnerable	If a child or family is vulnerable, it means there are certain risk factors in their lives that may hold them back from thriving, e.g. living in a deprived area or being a lone-parent family. However, these risks may not come to anything if families are sufficiently resilient and have access to universal community support and information should they need it. Being vulnerable doesn't necessarily lead to being 'in need'.

References and resources

With thanks to ...

Parents from [Hearing the Voice of Families in Warwickshire](#) online group and professionals from the [Early Help Action Group](#).

Local documents

Early help action group documentation

Local Government Association early help peer review (November 2017)

Ofsted Single inspection of local authority children's services (May 2017)

Warwickshire Child Poverty Strategy 2014–2018

Warwickshire Children & Family Centres – Service offer and delivery model

Warwickshire Children looked after needs assessment, Part 2: Focus on Prevention (2016) Warwickshire

County Council One Organisational Plan 2020

Warwickshire Health & Wellbeing Board Strategy 2014–2018

Warwickshire Priority Young People Strategy (2015)

Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board Strategic Plan 2015–2018

Warwickshire Smart Start Strategy 2016–2020

Warwickshire Thresholds for Services (April 2017)

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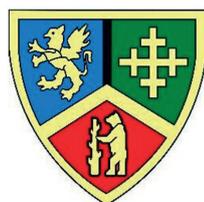
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North Warwickshire Borough Council





CHILDREN
& FAMILY
SUPPORT



PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY 2018 - 2023



Warwickshire
County Council