



# Early Help Strategy

Part One: Our vision for a co-ordinated, multi agency system

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## Introduction

Approximately 20% of children and young people – and their families – are likely to require some form of additional support at some point to ensure they thrive.

Early help makes a difference. It can transform children's and families' lives by identifying and resolving difficulties before they escalate into a potentially unmanageable situation; and gives them the resilience they need to thrive without professional support.

Late intervention is estimated to cost us £17 billion a year as a nation.

We know that delivering early intervention and prevention in the most effective way means enabling services and practitioners to work well together; and that this is as important as the actual services being delivered. The way we work with children, families and young people is also crucial.

We also know that, as of early 2015, services, agencies and community organisations are not working together as a whole system. We need to make sure that this changes, so that we make the best use of the resource available to us and families, children and young people are not swamped by too many practitioners working with them; waiting for too long to receive support; or left to fend for themselves too soon after support ends.

Early help in Medway should always be:

- Based on a good analysis of the underlying issues, so that the right support is offered at the right time
- Offered quickly
- Focussed on the solutions the child, young person or family wants to achieve, using the strengthening families model
- Designed to build capacity and resilience and strengthen the relationships around a child, family or young person so that, where possible, we build independence from additional support services
- Holistic, taking into account all of the factors in a child or young person's life
- Led by a single, committed individual who has the trust of the children, families and young people they are supporting
- Delivered by suitably qualified practitioners using evidence based practice in the smallest possible Team Around the Family

Where support is being delivered by more than one agency, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) should be used, because it support all of these principles and is designed for multi agency interventions.

### SWOT analysis of current early help arrangements (early 2015)

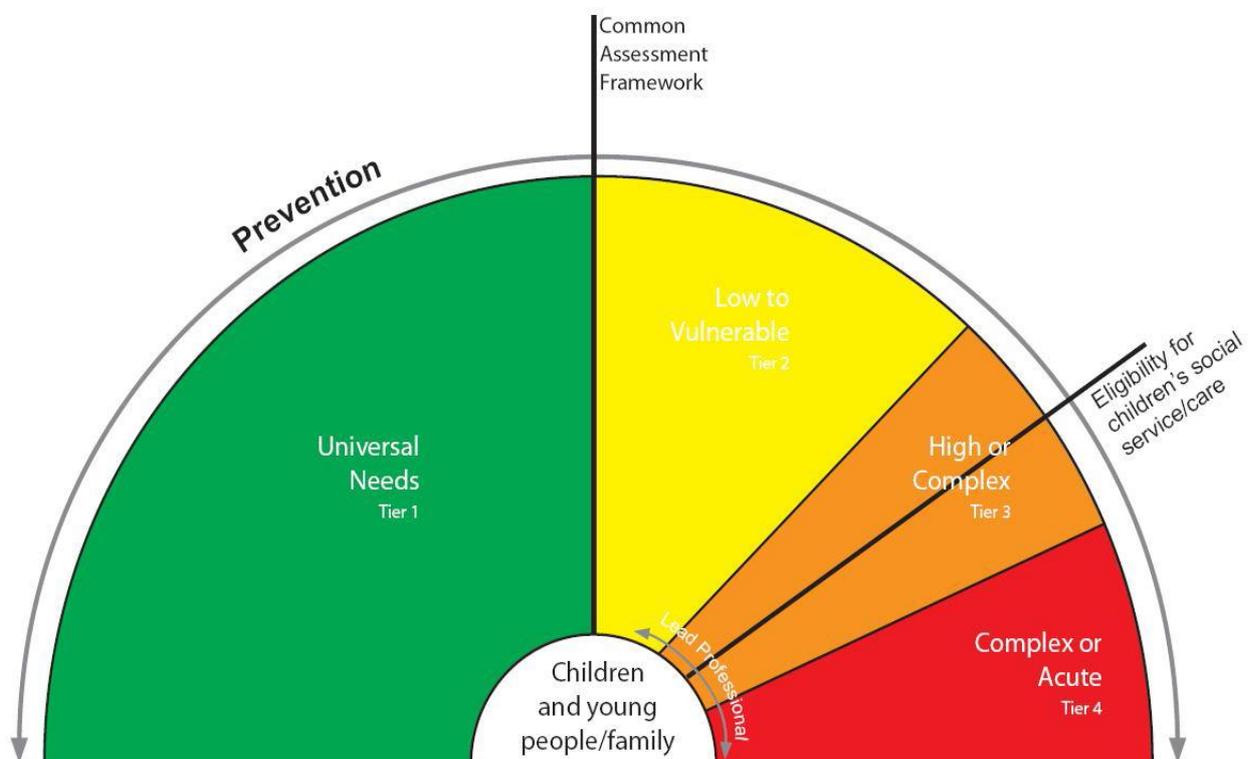
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong support for principles of collaboration</li> <li>• Medway Action for Families practice, reputation and experience</li> <li>• Children’s Centre offer is strong and has proven it can deliver results</li> <li>• Practical and networking support to lead professionals</li> <li>• A universal youth service, now developing a preventative offer alongside the Youth Offending Team</li> <li>• Resource in schools – most have a Family Liaison Worker/Family Support Worker</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure to support a systems approach is still developing – ie Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and joint commissioning</li> <li>• No single commissioning plan for children, families and young people</li> <li>• Shared understanding of the broad early help offer is limited</li> <li>• Delegated model of managing CAFs is dependent on an awareness of provision that is difficult to keep up to date</li> <li>• Data on progress and outcomes is held in different places</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of an emotional health and wellbeing strategy and a review of the CAMHS model – potential to link with broader early help offer and increase collaboration between providers at tier 1</li> <li>• Multi agency commitment to think about different types of solution, making use of new and different forms of support available in the community</li> <li>• Goodwill and understanding developed through Better Start bidding process</li> <li>• Four universities in Medway with expertise in children’s health, education and social care and keen to participate</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The high level of demand in acute health services for children and young people</li> <li>• Limited resource in CAF team to support decision making and monitor progress and outcomes</li> <li>• Where and how decisions are taken is unclear, to practitioners and often to families. There are too many places where this takes place</li> </ul>

Although there is a great deal to build on, the system is at present too fragmented and there are too many places where decisions are taken about a child or young person's needs, giving the potential for duplication of effort and inconsistent support – and frustration and inconvenience for families. There are too many points of access for practitioners in universal services to feel confident that they are being supported as well as possible. And there is too little collaboration between our core services.

## Leadership

Medway Children's Action Network (Medway CAN) brings together the leaders of the key agencies and organisations to define the goals for early help, lead innovation, involve communities, families and young people and maintain a strong focus on prevention. Through their day to day roles, members of Medway CAN strengthen connections between services and organisations and ensure that collaboration is encouraged so that services adapt to need and outcomes improve.

## Analysis of need



The Kent and Medway Inter Agency Threshold Criteria for Children in Need describes the levels of need experienced by children, young people and families and the appropriate response. The diagram above illustrates that early help is the appropriate response across a fairly wide spectrum of need, with some families' needs requiring quite intensive support, such as that provided by Medway Action for Families over the last few years.

There is a substantial amount of need at the high/complex level of early help in Medway (known as 2.5), just below the social care threshold; and this requires a different set of skills and interventions than early help where needs are less complex.

The more **complex situations**, where intensive interventions are likely to be required, are characterised by issues such as:

- Sexual exploitation, and coercion in teenage relationships,
- Debt, homelessness
- Disorganised attachment
- Violence and aggression in family and intimate relationships
- Substance use
- Mental health issues that impair development and/or parenting capacity
- Offending in family
- Missing children and runaways
- Extreme behaviour in children
- Gangs
- Persistent non attendance at school

Early intervention where needs are less complex, but the family, child or young person is **vulnerable and/or has additional needs**, is offered in circumstances such as the following:

- Vulnerable parents;
- Support with physical development and sociability;
- Low level emotional health – anxiety, self esteem, loss, identity;
- Bullying;

- Support with developing positive relationships;
- Building resilience and links within the community;
- Young carers;
- Speech and language development;
- Developmental delay;
- Housing difficulties;
- Support with nutrition, healthy living, smoking cessation;
- Risk awareness and safety;
- Help to raise aspirations, skills, careers advice and employability (parents as well as young people);
- Neuro-developmental conditions

We are currently analysing the needs of our children, young people and families who require additional support, so that we can ensure we have the right services in place across the system. These will include support for developmental needs and ensuring the safety, health and wellbeing of our children and young people – but also what we can do to create the conditions for enrichment, by developing self belief and encouraging achievement, so that this generation of young people takes advantage of all that Medway has to offer and step confidently into adulthood.

Improving outcomes is everyone's responsibility and Medway will think radically differently about how we work with and support communities and families and young people.

### **Medway CAN's priorities for action**

The ultimate aim for early help in Medway is to design a system that is focussed on making a significant difference to specific aspects of children and young people's lives and mobilising all of the necessary support in an integrated pathway to achieve that. This follows the model in early years of using robust evidence about key risks and opportunities in a child's early development and targeting interventions that are known to work and to enhance a child's development and reduce the likelihood of poor outcomes, such as poor emotional health and behavioural difficulties.

**We will begin by exploring the scope for making a difference in four recurring and cross cutting areas:**

- **Emotional health and wellbeing**
- **Domestic abuse**
- **Raising aspirations**
- **Language and discourse**

We envisage three stages of work to develop this model.

- 1 We first need to strengthen the platform for collaborative working. As our SWOT analysis shows, we must rationalise and improve some key processes around access, decision making and information sharing in order to be able to deliver well integrated, effective interventions.
- 2 We then need to ensure that our network of services and support enables us to respond quickly and appropriately, by having the right services in place.
- 3 Finally, we need to develop a shared understanding of and commitment to the preventative measures we can take, as a system, to make a significant difference to the outcomes we are supporting children, young people and families to achieve.

By strengthening process, we mean:

- Combining, where possible and beneficial, the number of “front doors” for practitioners wishing to raise concerns and request support;
- Assessing needs collaboratively, so that the right plan is put in place as soon as possible;
- Ensuring multi agency teams can work effectively with families, children and young people
- Reporting on impact and outcomes and bringing that information together

Ensuring we are commissioning the right services and using them in the most effective way will entail:

- Identification of needs and gaps
- Identification of under used potential (in the voluntary and community sectors for example)
- Focussing on the outcomes we want to achieve and how we can best achieve that with the available resource
- Working together to align resource and develop mutually supportive pathways

Completing the work in these stages will enable Medway CAN to identify the key preventative – and integrated - pathways we want to build to develop to make a real and lasting improvement to the lives of families, communities and young people in Medway. We will develop our thinking together, and by using the latest evidence and research from across disciplines and sectors.

## How we will measure our performance

Stage one: Strengthening the systems that support collaboration

<b>What we want to achieve</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By when</b>	<b>How will we measure success</b>
All of these actions require agreement to a rationalisation of referral pathways, decision making panels and access to early help	<p>Schools to advise on their needs in terms of accessing early help</p> <p>Link health pathways to early help arrangements</p> <p>Reduce the number of panels and linking them to core early help pathways, eg CAF</p> <p>Improve monitoring and recording of early help interventions</p> <p>Information sharing</p>	January – March 2015	<p>All universal services understand how to access early help and additional support</p> <p>Interventions are the right ones, with the right people involved</p> <p>Lead professionals and other practitioners feel better supported in assembling a multi agency intervention and developing a plan</p> <p>Communication between practitioners</p>

	protocols revised to enable appropriate sharing of information		<p>improves – in particular whether a child or family they are concerned about is already receiving support</p> <p>Reduction in the amount of cases being inappropriately escalated</p> <p>Thresholds and boundaries clear</p>
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Stage two: Ensuring that we have the services in place to meet need

<b>What we want to achieve</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By when</b>	<b>How will we measure success</b>
<p>An analysis of what the data, across all services and sources, is telling us:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- key data that describe the needs of children, young people and families with additional needs;</li> <li>- the services currently used by children, young people and families and the outcomes they achieve;</li> <li>- known gaps in provision.</li> </ul>	<p>A task group of the Joint Commissioning Management Group has commissioned an analysis of current provision for children's emotional health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Information from CAF and CADS about the needs of families, children and young people; which services are meeting their needs; and where are the gaps</p> <p>What children, young people and families have told us they want and need, both from individual services and from their lives more generally</p>	January - May 2015	A robust and comprehensive picture of need and provision in Medway that all partners agree with and are happy to use as the basis for future planning.

<p>Set against:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the big shifts we want to make in outcomes for children, young people and families, across all services;</li> <li>- what this tells us about the kind of interventions we need to have in place;</li> <li>- what we know works, both in terms of how we can organise services differently and evidence based interventions that build resilience in key areas for Medway.</li> </ul>	<p>Priority outcomes identified by services, agencies and front line practitioners</p> <p>What the data from various sources is telling us</p> <p>What are the current priorities for commissioners around service improvement, suggesting the system is not operating effectively enough</p> <p>What are the system failures, where children and families' vulnerability and susceptibility to poor outcomes becomes most pronounced</p> <p>What preventative interventions will support our aspirations</p> <p>Analysis of MAfF – what we want to transplant across early help and how we differentiate that part of the offer and ensure it is used most effectively</p>		
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Stage three: Designing preventative pathways into the system

<b>What we want to achieve</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By when</b>	<b>How will we measure success</b>
Integrated pathways, driven by data and disciplined in their methodology, achieving milestones toward key success criteria for children, young people and families in Medway.	By learning from the needs analysis methodology described above and accessing support from the Early Intervention Foundation and others.	Summer 2016	Measurement of the outcomes we have set ourselves.