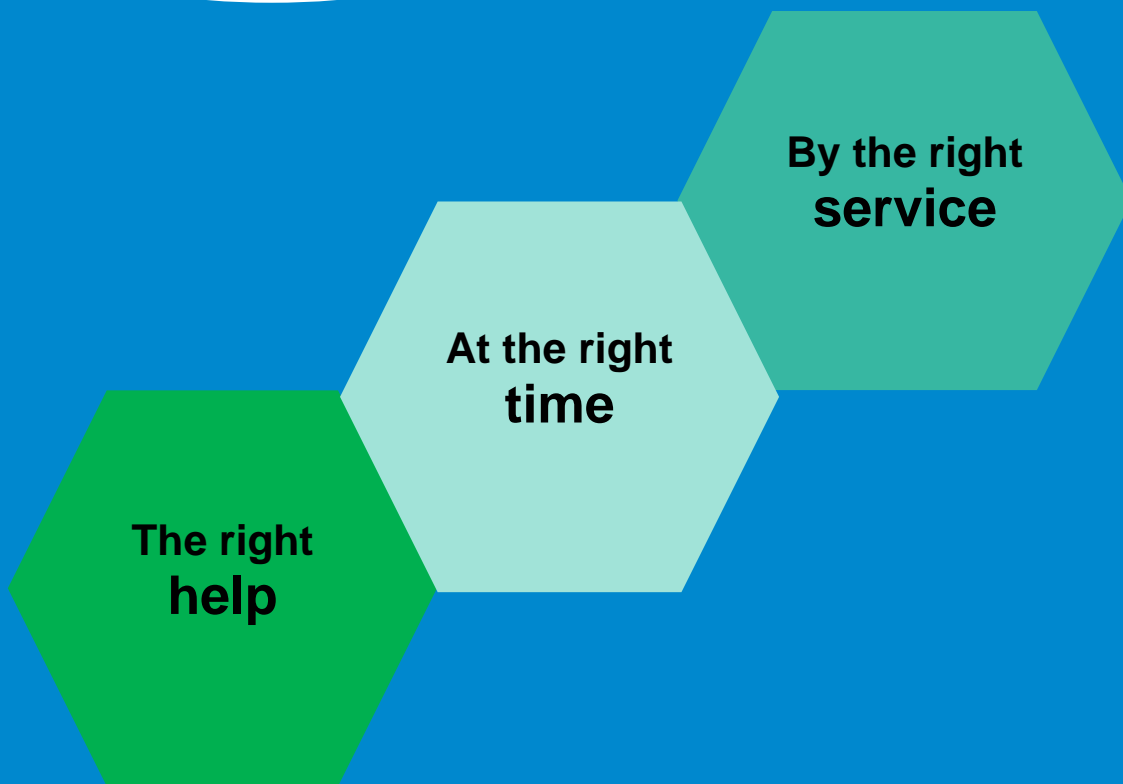


**Early Help Needs Assessment
2023-2024
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



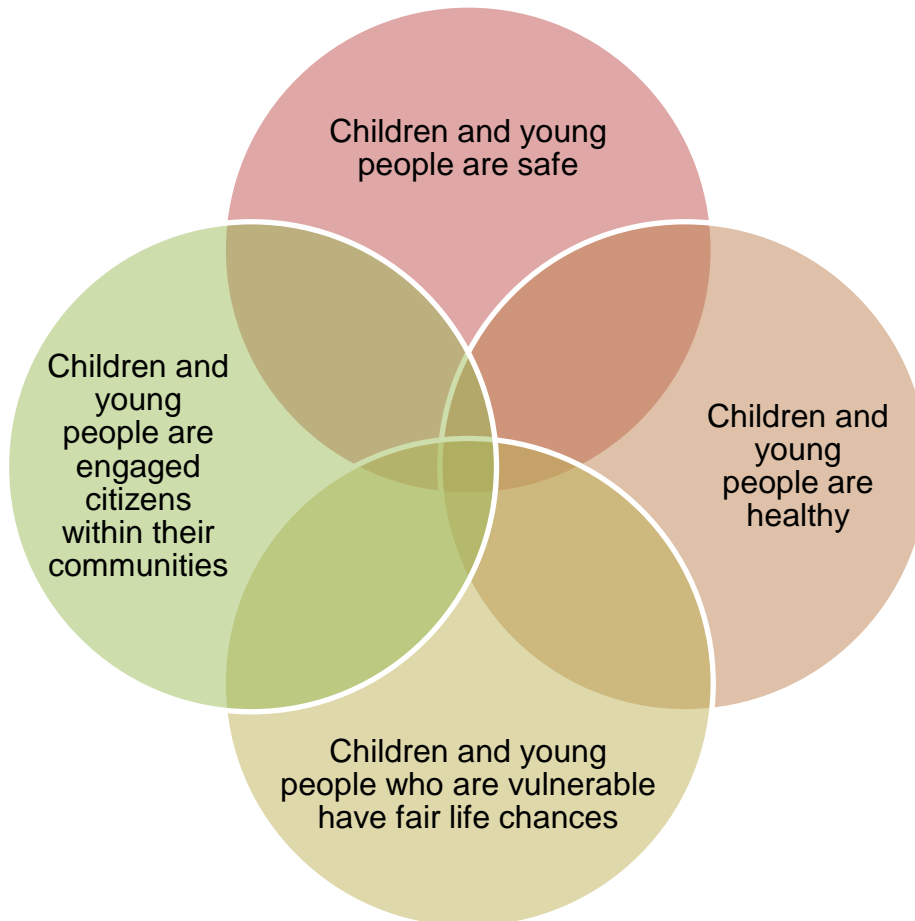
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1. Introduction and Purpose

Early Help in Bath and North East Somerset is about children, young people and families getting **the right help, at the right time, by the right service**. It is essential in ensuring that families can reach their full potential and achieve positive life outcomes. The Children and Young People's Plan 2021-23¹, focusses on achieving 4 main outcomes:



The Early Help and Intervention Strategy 2021-25² highlights the importance of:

“Developing an early help and intervention offer which is embedded in a “think family: think community” approach will identify and promote protective factors and resilience at an early stage and as a result prevent negative outcomes developing”.

Achieving this requires a multiagency approach and an understanding of the complex nature of the accumulation of factors and mitigating factors that contribute to the need for early help.

¹ <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-11/CYPP%20Refresh%202021-2023%20External%20version%20pdf.pdf>

² <https://thehub.bathnes.gov.uk/Page/23702>

The 2023 revision to the Working Together³ guidance focuses on:

“strengthening multi-agency working across the whole system of help, support and protection for children and their families, keeping a child-centred approach while bringing a whole-family focus, and embedding strong, effective and consistent multi-agency child protection practice”.

A refresh of the 2020 Early Help Needs Assessment (EHNA) was undertaken between September and December 2023 to ascertain unmet need, trends and gaps in the provision of Early Help for children, young people and families. It provides information as to the level of need for early help services and to identify actionable solutions to meet the needs through understanding what is available and where gaps may exist. It will be used to inform Early Help redesign work, commissioning priorities and service planning.

The Early Help Needs Assessment includes national and local research, papers and strategies, risk factors and local demographics and local data obtained through the Strategic Evidence Base⁴ and contract monitoring information.

2. Key Findings

The need for Early Help in B&NES is evident and demonstrated through both population and service level data. Through qualitative and quantitative work, it has been possible to identify the range of needs, although providing an exact quantitative picture of unmet need is not possible. Some key priorities for ongoing work are based on the following findings:

The burden of needs is not uniform across B&NES, with high needs likely to be experienced by children, young people and families who:

- Live in areas of higher deprivation
- Have SEND needs
- Are in receipt of free school meals
- Experience parental substance misuse, mental health or domestic abuse

Most prevalent needs prompting a referral for early help include:

- Social, emotional and mental health
- Improving family relationships
- Engagement with education, employment or training
- At risk of not achieving a good level of early years development
- Financial, housing and welfare support
- Impact of parental mental health, domestic abuse or substance misuse

Early help needs to maintain focus on:

- Whole family work
- Reducing inequalities
- Support to move beyond trauma
- Developing capacity and sustainability to provide early help support to a population where needs are increasing and becoming more complex

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

⁴ <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/strategic-evidence>

The needs assessment has confirmed the holistic nature of Early Help in B&NES. The founding principles of Early Help are understanding family needs. These are often complex and multifaceted even in what may appear initially to be more straightforward needs at time of referral. Analysis of case studies shows clear positive outcomes for those receiving Early Help in the following areas:

- Improved social, emotional and mental health
- Improved social connections and reduced isolation
- Improved housing
- Improved speech and language
- Improved family relationships
- Improved behaviour
- Improved Child safety
- Parenting skills and home routines
- Improved Child development
- Improved school engagement and attendance
- Improved confidence
- Increased opportunity to engage in further education, employment or training
- Contribution to SEND assessments
- Signposting, onward referrals and help to access other support

3. Conclusion

The burden of needs is not uniform across B&NES, with more work to be done across the wider system to reduce inequalities.

It will be vital in the current climate of financial challenge and increasing need, for all partners within the wider Early Help system to continue to work together to ensure that children and their families benefit from the best quality professional help at the earliest opportunity. National reviews such as the Josh Macalister Independent Review of Children's Social Care, Working Together 2023 and local strategy documents such as the Early Help and Intervention Strategy 2021- 2025, together with information from the B&NES strategic evidence base highlight specific groups of children, young people and families that would benefit from Early Help.

Consideration may need to be given to the targeting of Early Help resources to these groups, in light of budget constraints and growing needs. Enhancing the lead practitioner role could be held by a range of people, e.g. education staff. More details about which practitioners may act as a lead practitioner, their roles and responsibilities along with additional guidance, are provided in the Early Help System Guide.

Data remains an issue, with thought needed to develop a system wide outcomes framework and robust monitoring of need and impact.

Early Help Assessments will be available online in the near future, and services should be encouraged to use these as widely as possible to provide coordinated multi agency support. The online system with some defined KPIs will also enable better tracking of families through the system. This will allow accounting for the needs of all family members as individuals and considering how their needs impact on one another, including needs relating to: education, early years development, mental health and physical health, substance misuse, financial stability, housing, family relationships, domestic abuse and crime and linking these to the Supporting Families Outcomes Framework designed and supported by the Department of Education.

It is important to recognise and celebrate the quantity, breadth and quality of work that services within the wider Early Help system have continued to carry out in increasingly challenging circumstances, and the positive impacts this work has had on children, young people and families in B&NES.

4. Recommendations

Broadly, recommendations arising from the refresh of the EHNA can be broken down into 5 key areas. Further details regarding rationale and specific recommended actions can be found in the full EHNA.

1. Continue to develop a wide range of Early Help services in B&NES to offer seamless support for families. The local authorities should work with organisations and agencies to develop joined-up early help services, which can be delivered through, targeted family support, a B&NES Family Hub model & Start for Life offer
2. Improve system understanding that improving outcomes and investing in babies, children and young people is whole population prevention and early intervention
3. Develop an empowered and skilled workforce.
4. Focus Early Help services on prevention, social, economic and environmental factors (known as 'wider determinants') by making best use of available data and intelligence to manage and target services
5. Work collaboratively with system partners including the Integrated care Alliance (ICA) to meet the needs of children in our area especially for CYP requiring SEMH support and SEND (medical) assessments

The Early Help app for practitioners, which provides a wealth of information on local support and services, can be found here:



