North East Lincolnshire Council

Families First Prevention and Early Help Strategy 2016 – 2018

To keep improving outcomes for children so that they thrive and are safe
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1. Introduction: Why do we need prevention and early help in North East Lincolnshire?

We know that effective early help can transform lives – helping parents/carers into work, stabilising children at school and removing the barriers to living healthy and productive lives.

The most effective early help considers the whole family and puts in place as much support as necessary, for as long as it is needed.

Whilst we understand that the majority of families thrive and do well, without the need for support, from time to time, there are some families who require some additional help. We know that there are a number of vulnerable children, young people and families in North East Lincolnshire who are more likely to experience difficulties in their lives and may need support to help overcome them.

These children, young people and families are likely to be those:

- Suffering neglect (see neglect strategy).
- With alcohol, drug or substance misuse issues or those living with a parent or carer who has alcohol, drug or substance misuse issues.
- Who are affected by domestic abuse.
- Who have an identified mental health problem or whose parents or carers have mental health issues.
- Engaged in anti-social behaviour, in receipt of a police reprimand or on the edge of criminal activity and and/or with a parent or carer in prison.
- In families experiencing severe or persistent poverty or whose families are homeless or long term unemployed.
- At risk of entering or re-entering children’s social care.
- Who are teenage parents or pregnant teenagers.
- Missing education.
- Missing from home.
- Who are young carers.
- With disabilities or special educational needs (SEND).
- Who are asylum seekers and refugees.
- With past trauma and low resilience.
- In families where parenting capacity is limited.

By continually developing our understanding of community need, there may be opportunities to intervene before problems occur. This strategy sets out North East Lincolnshire’s continued ambition for the development of a partnership approach for prevention and early help aimed at improving outcomes for all children, young people and families and ensuring that the right support is given at the right time.

We recognise that to achieve this ambition a place based approach is needed and that all stakeholders may have different roles to play. We need to make best use of resources ensuring savings are made as we reduce the need for high cost specialist services by supporting families earlier when issues arise.

There are opportunities to support people and intervene where necessary across the life course. In North East Lincolnshire we believe in promoting opportunities for self-reliance, independence and resilience. We need to work in collaboration with each other in order to enable communities to thrive.
2. What is Prevention and early help?

Prevention and early help is defined as responding as soon as possible to the needs of children, young people and families who are ‘vulnerable’ to poor life outcomes. It aims to put services in place and offer support before things get worse, to help the family move on from their difficulties and lead happier and healthier lives. Prevention and early help therefore aims to promote better long term life outcomes for families and in doing so, also prevent them needing more intensive and higher cost provision in the future, such as children’s social care or the criminal justice system.

It is important to be clear about what and how we will need to approach prevention and early help. With this in mind, the definitions favoured by partners, families and stakeholders in North East Lincolnshire are as follows:

- **Prevention (upstream):** Preventing, or minimising the risk, of problems arising – See Figure 1: This would be represented by the universal element of the child concern model.

- **Early help (midstream):** Targeting individuals or groups at high risk or showing early signs of a particular problem to try to stop it occurring. See Figure 1: This covers the universal plus and vulnerable elements of the child concern model.

- **Early treatment (downstream):** Intervening once there is a problem, to stop it getting worse and redress the situation.

The child concern model

The Family Support Pathway Threshold of Need and Child Concern Model is the document which is used to ensure appropriate support is provided at the correct level. Figure 1 overleaf shows the levels of the child concern model which are described in more detail in the family support pathway document.

Prevention and early help has been highlighted as a priority in North East Lincolnshire. We are taking a whole system, whole place approach to our collective issues. We will work with children, young people and families together to address these, in order to make the most of the resources we have and offer the best deal to our communities.
No low level concerns identified

Low level concerns identified

Higher level concerns are starting to be raised

Vulnerable

Complex

Severe

Refer to MASH

Consider child protection

Neglect tool score 0-1

Universal

Level 0

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

Level 4

No concerns identified

Family hubs

Health & education services

Supporting children, young people & families

North East Lincolnshire
3. What are we currently doing well?

Since the publication of the first prevention and early intervention strategy for North East Lincolnshire in 2014, building on the good practice of what works, examples of progress and current good practice include:

- Building on the excellent practice of our children centre model, 100% of which are judged to be ‘outstanding’ or ‘good’ we have implemented a model of Family Hubs, extending the offer for families at the heart of every community. Offering information, advice and guidance and bringing together services from pre-birth to adulthood (0-19yrs).
- Design and implementation of a framework for practice – ‘creating strong communities’ - across all provision, incorporating four key elements which include, Signs of Safety, Family Group Conferencing, Restorative Practice and Outcome Based Accountability, thus enabling a child and family focused practice, with a more common language.
- Delivered an extensive programme of workforce development across agencies in relation to the creating strong communities model.
- Established an effective team of Family Group Conferencing specialists across the borough, enabling the effective family focused challenge and support.
- Restructure of provision across early help in order to better align resources and improve integration in the Family Support Pathway.
- Revision and implementation of a new threshold model including the introduction of universal plus to support families earlier.
- Jointly commissioned early years provision with schools forum to target vulnerable pupils aged between 4 and 6 years to improve school readiness, enabling bespoke provision directly with schools, hubs and families.
- Implementation of a new single assessment and family plan (using a Signs of Safety approach and also as the safeguarding referral if needed) and multi-agency cluster single assessment meetings.
- Clear processes, challenge and support opportunities developed to step cases “up” and “down” threshold levels (ensuring cases are appropriately monitored and are managed at the appropriate threshold).
- Improved recording systems allowing tracking of cases across all thresholds.
- Development of the new front door for prevention and early help (the families first access point) so concerns can be raised at an early help level, not waiting until safeguarding thresholds are met to make a referral – linking this closely with the Multi- Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- The beginnings of a culture change branded ‘Families First’: “We aim to keep families safely together where possible, no one can do this alone. Early help is everyone’s business, it’s something we do, not somewhere we go.”
- A response to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and related vulnerabilities such as missing, based on prevention and early help, bespoke training developed for staff, and a high success rate in court has led to almost all CSE cases now being managed at early help.
Early help is everyone’s business

Figure 2: North East Lincolnshire’s prevention and early help Model

Early Help, Troubled Families & Targeted Support

Complex / Severe

Statutory Services

Family Support Pathway, Single Assessment and Plan

Universal Offer and Universal Pathway 0-19

- Robust digital universal offer
- Integrated multi-disciplinary provision in each cluster. Teams who know their community and who to support
- Targeted provision, based on local need with the key aim of building resilient families and addressing the drivers of demand
- Multi-agency decision making at weekly allocations in each cluster, deciding who and how to best support families
Creating strong communities: A framework for practice

Alongside and integrated with the prevention and early help project the creating strong communities (CSC) programme (funded by the social care innovation fund) was set up in April 2015.

The programme model is designed to fundamentally change the way local practitioners and partners work together within North East Lincolnshire to support and safeguard vulnerable children, young people and families. The four elements of the model have been designed as support tools to be the framework for practice within children’s services. As part of the CSC programme’s introduction It has also been anticipated that it will enable a reduction in the high level of demand for statutory provision, which will then lead to a redistribution of resources and thus enable sustainability of the model’s approach.

The model has four elements which are outlined overleaf in Figure 3 and include the following:

Family Group Conferencing provides mediated support for the whole family, resulting in an agreed family support plan, which sets out the best route forward for the family to take care of their child(ren).

Signs of Safety (SoS) enables practitioners across different disciplines to work collaboratively and in partnership with children, young people and families using the same language and methods.

Restorative Practice is an approach which aims to resolve conflicts at the earliest stage, by encouraging both robust challenge and support for all parties. Restorative Practice promotes critical reflection and consideration of language.

Outcome Based Accountability is a powerful thinking process which focuses a whole organisation on outcomes rather than process.

Within the design of the CSC programme model there is a strong belief that the whole programme is greater than the sum of the component parts. Outcome Based Accountability is placed at the heart of the model and provides the outcomes focus or “glue” that holds the other three elements of new support practice together.

Since April 2015 the CSC programme has gone a long way to develop and embed the practice framework for the entire children’s workforce of North East Lincolnshire.
4. What still needs to be done?

We need to build on the success and the evidence that we have already. If collectively we are going to enable a more prevention focused environment for children and families across North East Lincolnshire, we still have much to do. We have made much progress, and have also identified a number of areas that we need to develop further in order to enable effective early help for children, young people and families. Our offer needs to become more integrated and the model of delivery needs to change and develop. We need to engage with more of the hard to reach families improving the effectiveness and targeting of early help.

As a collaboration of key public and voluntary sector partners we need to develop and deliver a recommissioned provision across the entire range of support for children and families across North East Lincolnshire, via the 0-19 programme. This will be the delivery mechanism for this new prevention and early help strategy and the 0-19 programme team will play a key role in supporting and facilitating the required developments. This is by sustainably rebalancing children’s services by focusing on prevention and reducing demand to social care.

As a result, further development areas include:

- Capitalise on any opportunities to share practice, develop provision and use resources effectively that opportunities such as cross boundary working and devolution may offer.
- Delivering an integrated approach to areas of high demand as defined by local partnership data with a focus on the core drivers of demand.
- Improving the way we listen and respond to children, young people and their families.
- Working with some families for longer to support sustainable change and resilience.
- Updating skills of the workforce to be able to more effectively respond to the issues most affecting families. Staff across all agencies require core skills in:
  - Identifying and responding to domestic abuse.
  - Identifying and responding to substance misuse.
  - Emotional health support.
  - Assertiveness and persistence with hard to reach families.
- The council needs to invest in partnerships, not just through board meetings but through one to one relationships to build shared values and outcomes.
- Improving communication with staff and partners to help develop the understanding of early help and give clarity around responsibilities.
- Seeking opportunities to align resources and join up commissioning including commissioning different specialist support and services around the core issues that drive demand.
- Developing our digital capabilities and offer to ensure that a broader section of the community are and can engage through technology at appropriate levels of need.
- Improving work with schools/academies and other education providers to ensure that we are making the most of our opportunities and resources together, to ensure children and young people and their families have the best chances to succeed within mainstream education.
- To deliver a conference on prevention and early help for head teachers/principals and senior leaders within education about their role and how we can build effective mechanisms for prevention together.
- Ensure that we further develop and embed the creating strong communities model as our frame work for practice, ensuring families are at the heart of positive change.
- Seek opportunities to align resources towards prevention and early help and ensure that any opportunities to jointly commission provision are realised.
- Ensure that any resources are deployed collaboratively against identified need.
- Embed the Professional Capabilities Framework, ensuring that we have the appropriate skills across the borough in order to enable effective delivery of prevention focused work.
- Ensure the future model of children’s health delivery to be embedded within all hubs, pathways and provision in order to ensure we are capitalising on key skills and offering the right support to families.
- Ensure that those who are hardest to reach are always targeted and supported in the right ways. Ensuring that the support is not hard to reach, whatever the level of need. Using our collective knowledge to identify those people most likely to need our help and get the right support to them at the earliest opportunity.
5. How will we know that prevention and early help is making a difference?

Our aspiration for the prevention and early help strategy is that the success of our efforts will be shown in positive outcomes for all of our children and young people. Our success will be measured in the achievement of the five outcomes outlined within the North East Lincolnshire Council outcomes framework and commissioning plan.

The five overarching outcomes detailed within the plan are, that all people in North East Lincolnshire:

- Enjoy and benefit from a strong economy.
- Feel safe and are safe.
- Enjoy good health and wellbeing.
- Benefit from sustainable communities.
- Fulfil their potential through skills and learning.

These outcomes are supported by a series of high level indicators, informed by a range of performance measures, which we will use to manage our progress. In future we will move away from the traditional approach of reporting activity (how much, how often) and ensure that we focus on measuring and understanding the impact of what we do (what difference does it make?).

Analysis suggests that there are a number of drivers of demand at high levels of need the following measures of success for the further development of prevention and early help in North East Lincolnshire have been identified:

- Safe reductions in the number of looked after children.
- Safe reductions in the number of children on child protection plans.
- Safe reductions in the number of children in need.
- Reduced number of referrals requiring no further action (NFA).
- Reduced number of assessments completed by social workers.
- Evidence of successful interventions undertaken (reporting on impact, not process).
- Reduced numbers of children in residential placements and placed with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs).
6. Benefits and cost effectiveness of prevention and early help

“In England and Wales we are spending nearly £17 billion per year on addressing the damaging problems that affect children and young people such as mental health problems, unemployment and youth crime. This is only the immediate fiscal cost in a single year and although it is substantial, it does not capture the longer term impact of these poor outcomes (which can last into adult life and sometimes into the next generation), nor the wider social and economic costs. Late Intervention is not just expensive, it is also difficult to argue it is money spent well.”

The Early Intervention Foundation, Spending on Late Intervention, 2015

There is an excellent foundation for the 0-19 programme in North East Lincolnshire. There are many excellent ways of working, service systems, models of intervention and ideas that will be extended across the borough – and there are examples of good prevention and early help practice across health, education, social services and the community and voluntary sector, as well as in North East Lincolnshire Council. The 0-19 programme will take this into account.

Prevention and early help is a key transformation priority for North East Lincolnshire, part of the Council’s Commissioning Strategy. It links directly with the emergence and further development of effective and inclusive community leadership, and it provides a vehicle for the improvement of outcomes for children, young people and families in North East Lincolnshire.
7. Workforce and practice development

Further developing early help in North East Lincolnshire may mean, in practice, working with parents/carers experiencing issues such as domestic abuse, mental illness, substance misuse, or helping young parents/carers. It might mean working with teenagers involved in crime, child sexual exploitation or anti-social behaviour; working with children and young people who experience neglect, poor health or who have poor achievement or aspirations for their future.

In April 2015 the creating strong communities programme was introduced, following a successful bid to the social care innovation fund. This has supported workforce development as well as culture shift. Through the introduction of a four dimension model incorporating Outcome Based Accountability, Restorative Practice, Signs of Safety and Family Group Conferencing, the programme has created the appetite for change as well as enabling the system shift necessary to reduce the numbers of children, young people and families requiring intensive support.

In terms of the prevention and early help workforce the expectation is that they must be equipped with the knowledge, skills and behaviours to change the nature of their relationship with families by developing resilience within communities and moving from “doing to” to “working with”. This will be achieved by developing core skills in low level counselling, emotional health, assertiveness and persistence with hard to reach families. It will also mean supporting the main drivers of demand commonly referred to as the “toxic trio” (domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health).

To support these workforce requirements there has been a refresh of the children’s workforce strategy (2016-19) some aims from which are to equip the workforce in providing effective support to improve people’s lives. Develop a workforce that is able to build and create respectful and collaborative professional working relationships. Build a knowledgeable, highly skilled and confident workforce that can work with the communities of North East Lincolnshire. Ensure that safeguarding risks are identified and managed effectively when working with children, young people and families.

The revised strategy also outlines the priorities for the workforce which are:
1. Embedding a new organisational operating model.
2. A council that commissions for outcomes.
4. Organisational learning and engagement.
5. Pay recognition and reward.

To support the workforce strategy a Children’s Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) has also been developed. This framework sets clear standards for practice and creates portability between services and geographic boundaries. The PCF identifies the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for people who work, volunteer or lead work with children, young people and their families. The main aim of the framework being to improve the quality of prevention and early help work.

There are 9 capabilities within the Children's PCF and these are detailed below:
1. Relationships and effective direct work.
2. Child development.
3. Adult mental ill-health, substance abuse, domestic violence, physical ill-health and disability.
4. Abuse and neglect of children.
6. Analysis, decision-making, planning and review.
7. The law and the family justice system.
8. The role of supervision.
Under these headings the children’s PCF also includes the capabilities that will be required to deliver the main outcomes within North East Lincolnshire’s outcomes framework:

- Abuse
- Bullying
- Child sexual exploitation
- Domestic abuse
- Emotional health
- Equality of opportunity for children with disabilities
- Healthy weight for children and young people
- Neglect

The children’s PCF then goes on to outline the knowledge, skills and behaviour capabilities statements within nine distinct categories which are:

A. Starting work with children, young people and families
B. Universal
C. Universal plus
D. Vulnerable
E. Complex
F. Severe
G. Team leaders
H. Senior managers
I. Strategic leaders

Finally the descriptors in each category then outline the skills, knowledge and behaviours required by the people working volunteering, and leading at those levels.

During the period of this prevention and early help strategy the main focus for workforce development will come from the requirements outlined within the children’s workforce strategy, as well as PCF but will also include any emerging needs arising from the implementation of the 0-19 programme.
8. Outcome focused alliances

Our Vision is that North East Lincolnshire will have a multi-agency integrated approach where all partners collaborate, co-ordinate, jointly prioritise and maximise their collective efforts to ensure that children, young people and adults are better able to achieve success, make healthier choices, be resilient, be independent, be good parents/carers and feel that they have voice and influence.

To progress this prevention and early help work we need to ensure that we all play a part. Prevention and early help is not the responsibility of someone else, we all have a role to play.

The public sector has changed and continues to change. We cannot deliver a sustainable, prevention focused system together by delivering in traditional ways or by working in isolation. Service or organisational centric approaches to delivery must cease and will not offer the support needed. We need to move towards effective, outcomes focused alliances that will enable children, young people and families to thrive within North East Lincolnshire.

The Multi-Agency Children’s Partnership Board provides the over-arching governance for the development of this work and will report and ensure the necessary connectivity with the relevant theme boards. Community Safety, Health and Well Being and Local Safeguarding Children Board.

There is a strong commitment from all partners to continue to collaborate to improve outcomes for children and young people and all partners have a significant contribution to make to achieve this ambition.

If we are to achieve our vision, we must continue to develop strong collaborative alliances between partners, including schools, the voluntary and community sector, police and general practitioners (GPs), to ensure inter-agency service delivery to meet the needs of those most vulnerable or at risk.

9. Useful documents and links

- North East Lincolnshire Commissioning Plan and Outcomes Framework
- Family Support Pathway, Threshold of Need Child Concern Model
- Neglect Strategy
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- E safety
- Professional Capabilities Framework
- Children’s Workforce Strategy
- Family Group Conferencing Framework
- Digital strategy
- Children’s voice toolkit
- Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Domestic Abuse One system Strategy
- Futures In Mind
Early help is everyone's business